

Sight & Sound

Monthly Film Review

1/6

August



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ON THE COVER: Gloria Swanson and William Holden in a scene from Billy Wilder's new film, *Sunset Boulevard*

DRAWINGS BY PETER KNEEBONE

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SIGHT AND SOUND'S GUIDE TO CURRENT FILMS

Brief Pointers to the principal films showing in British cinemas during August. Last-minute changes of programme after our press-date may cause one or two inaccuracies (chiefly in the London area) but we hope this list may serve as a useful general guide. Films with an asterisk are particularly recommended.

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN (M.G.M.). Uninspired technicolor version of the pleasing Irving Berlin musical. (Betty Hutton, Howard Keel: director, George Sidney.)

AU DELA DES GRILLES (Films de France). A criminal on the run and an Italian waitress meet and fall in love in Genoa. Pre-war style French romantic melodrama: well acted and stylishly directed. (Jean Gabin, Isa Miranda: director, Rene Clement.)

BITTER SPRINGS (G.F.D.). A pioneer Australian family of the 1900's trek across 600 miles of country to find a new homestead, and find it difficult to come to terms with the aborigines. Uninterestingly done. (Chips Rafferty, Tommy Trinder: director, Ralph Smart.)

CAIRO ROAD (A.B.-Pathe). Dope smugglers versus the Egyptian police: average, British-made thriller. (Eric Portman, Maria Mauban: director, David Macdonald.)

***CRISIS (M.G.M.).** Topical and interesting melodrama about a doctor forced to operate on a power-mad Latin American dictator, and his crisis of conscience. (Cary Grant, Jose Ferrer, Signe Hasso: director, Richard Brooks.)

DANCE HALL (G.F.D.). Ealing's investigation of the local Palais: dance hall settings not handled with sufficient imagination to make up for the serious plot deficiencies. (Natasha Parry, Diana Dors, Bonar Colleano: director, Charles Crichton.)

***FANNY (G.C.T.).** The second part of Marcel Pagnol's richly flavoured trilogy of French provincial life. Fine acting. (Raimu, Pierre Fresnay: director, Mark Allegret, 1932.)

FATHER OF THE BRIDE (M.G.M.). Pleasant, skilful light comedy about the excitements of a small-town marriage. (Spencer Tracy, Joan Bennett, Elizabeth Taylor: director, Vincente Minelli.)

FURIES, The (Paramount). Rivalry between a napoleonic cattle baron of the West and his self-willed daughter: feuds, violence, love-hate and questionable morality at great length. (Walter Huston, Barbara Stanwyck, Wendell Corey: director, Anthony Mann.)

***LETTER FROM AN UNKNOWN WOMAN (Eros).** A touching and delicate romantic story, set in Vienna of the 1900's, of the lost love of a young girl for a pianist. (Joan Fontaine, Louis Jourdan: director, Max Ophuls.)

MOVIE CRAZY (Monarch). Reissue of a 1932 Harold Lloyd comedy; with good moments, but as a whole disappointing. Silent comedy technique not really adapted to the demands of sound. (Constance Cummings: director, Clyde Brickman.)

NIGHT AND THE CITY (Fox). Jules Dassin thriller, made in London, about the efforts of a small-time spiv to control wrestling promotion. Cut-to-pattern violence and erratic location work. (Richard Widmark, Gene Tierney, Googie Withers.)

NO SAD SONGS FOR ME (Columbia). The intriguing Margaret Sullivan returns in a careful drama about a woman who discovers she has incurable cancer. (Wendell Corey, Viveca Lindfors: director, Rudolph Mate.)

ODETTE (British Lion). This difficult subject—a tribute to Odette Churchill, a heroine of the war—needs more than good intentions. (Anna Neagle, Trevor Howard: director, Herbert Wilcox.)

***ON THE TOWN (M.G.M.).** Musical made with immense verve, energy and speed: much was shot on location in New York, and the film breaks right away from established musical convention, gaining immeasurably in life and excitement. (Gene Kelly, Vera-Ellen, Frank Sinatra: directors, Gene Kelly and Stanley Donen.)

***ORPHEE (Films de France).** Cocteau's modern retelling of the Orphic myth: an unique and fascinating film. (Jean Marais, Maria Casares, Francois Perier.)

***PANIC IN THE STREETS (Fox).** A New Orleans man-hunt, under the threat of an outbreak of plague. Sharp, exciting, well written and directed location thriller. (Richard Widmark, Barbara Bel Geddes, Paul Douglas: director, Elia Kazan.)

SANDS OF IWO JIMA (British Lion). Mediocre war film, dealing with the American marine landings on Tarawa and Iwo Jima, and singling out the adventures of a conventional tough sergeant, capably played by John Wayne. (John Agar, Forrest Tucker: director, Allan Dwan.)

SO LONG AT THE FAIR (G.F.D.). The fascinating story of a young Englishman's disappearance from his Paris hotel on the eve of the 1885 Exhibition: made with care but without imagination. (Jean Simmons, Dirk Bogarde: directors, Terence Fisher and Antony Darnborough.)

STAGE FRIGHT (Warner). Latest British-made Hitchcock, with an Anglo-American cast: a man on the run story with London backgrounds. Some effective moments, but the handling is still slow and overblown. (Richard Todd, Jane Wyman, Marlene Dietrich, Michael Wilding.)

***SYLVIE ET LE FANTOME (Film Traders).** Romantic comedy: a pleasing minor work by the director of *Douce* and *Le diable au corps*. (Odette Joyeux, Francois Perier: director, Claude Autant-Lara.)

TOO DANGEROUS TO LOVE (Warner). A man and a woman meet on a murder jury, and the progress of their growing love is bound up with that of the trial. Static, talkative, but with some good writing. (Ginger Rogers, Dennis Morgan: director, Brethaigne Windust.)

***TOP HAT (R.K.O.).** Welcome reissue of one of the best Astaire-Rogers musicals. (Director, Mark Sandrich: 1935.)

TREASURE ISLAND (R.K.O.). Disney-produced (colour and live action) version of the Stevenson story. Competently staged, but lacking the true spirit of adventure. (Bobby Driscoll, Robert Newton: director, Byron Haskin.)

TRIO (G.F.D.). The quality of three Maugham short stories survives uneven treatment. (Jean Simmons, Roland Culver, Nigel Patrick: directors Harold French, Ken Annakin.)

WATERFRONT (G.F.D.). British melodrama with a Liverpool docks setting. Not good. (Robert Newton, Susan Shaw, Kathleen Harrison: director, Michael Anderson.)

WINCHESTER '73 (G.F.D.). The story of "the gun that won the West" told in patchy fashion: some excitements interspersed with very indifferent scenes. (James Stewart, Stephen McNally, Shelley Winters: director, Anthony Mann.)

WOODEN HORSE, The (British Lion). Sober, well-made version of the famous escape story, with a script weak in design and characterisation. (Leo Genn, Anthony Steel: director, Jack Lee.)

The Front Page

"Movies are Better than Ever"

BRITISH AND AMERICAN trade papers have recently reflected the increasing alarm of the industry at falling box-office returns. This state of affairs is, of course, perennial and seasonal, although television has now joined the weather as a scape-goat: but, amidst the showmanship conventions in America, the better business competitions in Britain, a new note is discernible. In the past, blame for a box-office slump has usually been attached to some extraneous cause—war, weather, or competition from other media—but now the slogans and the war cries seem to show some appreciation that what is needed is, simply, better pictures. 20th Century-Fox adopts the slogan, "Movies are better than ever—from 20th Century-Fox": other companies have their variations on the same theme.

The fault of film industries everywhere has always been to underestimate the public response, to assume that the strange, the foreign, the experimental, are necessarily box-office poison. It is true that the "good" pictures hailed by the trade for their box-office qualities (*The Third Man*, *Twelve o'Clock High*, *The Blue Lamp*, *Morning Departure*, *On the Town*) cannot be described, at most, as more than relatively daring, but they are films which have been generally praised by press as well as trade and public. On the other hand, cheap, shoddy productions made with no motive but the hope of quick financial reward, often misfire. More significant still, both in Britain and the U.S.A. a new kind of audience is growing, joining film societies, encouraging the development of specialist cinemas and "art theatres". If this public increasingly deserts the commercial cinema, the latter has only itself to blame; meanwhile, it is generally agreed that the ordinary public, with money shorter and rival entertainments becoming more attractive, is more selective and even, perhaps, more adventurous.

The exhibitors are alive to the need for better pictures: producers and production companies, in statements and advertisements, proclaim that better pictures are the answer to the box-office slump. It is perhaps not too much to hope that the commercial and critical view of a "good" picture might come to coincide more closely, especially after some recent box-office endorsements of the critical viewpoint. A time of prosperity is, after all, seldom a time for experiment. With production diminished in Britain and, to a lesser extent, in the U.S.A., exhibitors might well seize this opportunity to broaden their definition of a "good" picture to include, at least, such continental successes as *Bicycle Thieves* and *Jour de Fête*. Such a move might have something of the violence of a shock injection; but movies are not made "better than ever" simply by stating that they are so. This is certainly the time to take a chance.

The Missing Millions

Last month in the House of Commons, Mr. Harold Wilson announced a new scheme to give British producers a chance to recoup some of the "missing millions" of the film industry. One consequence of the some 15 per cent. increase in revenue to the industry as a result of Entertainments Duty concessions should be of particular interest. Mr. Wilson estimated that the amount of box-office takings in the hands of exhibitors would be increased, for a start, by about

£3 million: the exhibitors have agreed to pay half of this sum into "a central pool from which payments will be made to producers of British films". A proportion of the money in this pool will be allocated to aid various kinds of specialist production, such as children's films, and "to support the production of types of films the value of which is not always measured by their box-office takings". Mr. Wilson added that it would be only a "small" proportion, but one hopes it will be more than the 10 per cent. he tentatively suggested.

Normally it is only the large production company that can afford to subsidise artistic experiment from the pool of box-office certainties: most of the American companies have done so, but in Britain to-day no company, and least of all an independent, can afford such a risk. The need, nevertheless, for an imaginative policy of long-term survival as well as short-term first aid, has been stressed before in these pages. The best approach to the box-office may now well be to take it by surprise. Mr. Wilson's new scheme suggests that this policy, in fact, may be taking shape.

Back to Showmanship

SHOWMANSHIP IS IN THE AIR. The talkies passed their peak of popularity in 1946 and cinema proprietors are having a welcome fit of introspection. Here are all the things we appreciate

when we go to the pictures:—

1. Coloured lights on the screen during the titles. These are most effective when they make the titles impossible to read, and particularly striking on colour films, when they enormously improve the colour values intended by the designer.

2. Projecting designs on to the screen. This splendid practice invariably impresses when a suitable picture is held on the screen for half a minute before the censor card appears. When the film's titles incorporate a design of their own, a most interesting chiaroscuro of patterns is often apparent; and the *dernier cri* of this device is to fade out the slide half way through the first shot of the actual film.

3. Continuing the interval gramophone records right into the picture. This is best when continued right until the titles fade out, but good effects are also possible by mixing half way through the trademark fanfare.

4. Making full use of the organ. It can be flat or sharp, according to taste, and the organist should study the title music a bit, so he can help it out as best he can.

5. In all cases, the curtains should be drawn over as much of the titles as possible. Opening them very late is a handy way of making the audience wonder what's coming. If the film indulges in the abominable practice of having a cast list at the end, and if it's too much trouble to tear it off, then drawing the curtains over it is nearly as good.

ATTITUDES IN SEARCH OF A FILM



"Ooh, what a lot of blood".



"Of course, it was a fundamentally dishonest approach to the whole problem".



"You look so nice in this funny light".

INTERVIEW WITH COCTEAU

Francis Koval

AFTER A PRIVATE SHOWING of *Orphée* arranged by the Union of French Cine-Technicians, I happened to leave the cinema in the company of two people whose views on Jean Cocteau were diametrically opposed.

"This is a work of art which will stand out as a landmark in the history of the cinema!" said one of them.

"Nothing but wasted money!" grumbled the other. "Another of those Cocteau attempts to return to the eccentricities of the twenties and it fully deserves the name of *arrière-garde*. As a Frenchman I feel ashamed for the mental and moral corruption of this individual who is now invading even the screen".

Such discordant opinions have surrounded Cocteau's work ever since he started writing forty years or so ago, and particularly since in 1930 he experimented in the cinema with *Le Sang d'Un Poète*, a dreamlike fantasy certainly not designed to appeal to the general public. It is typical of his personality that none of his works is received by the world with indifference. Whoever comes within the orbit of his personal magnetism, that seems to vibrate in all his artistic utterances, becomes either one of his fervent admirers or a dogged adversary. Many of the latter category simply resent Cocteau's ways without making the mental effort required to

penetrate the mysteries of his rather intricate style, and abandon any attempt at getting acquainted with his life's work and manifold achievements.

In fact, when judging Cocteau's contribution to the cinema one shouldn't forget that before turning to the camera he had used almost every medium accessible to express his ideas and to record his visions. Not only did he publish about thirty collections of poems, a few novels, numerous essays and a dozen successful plays, but in artistic circles he also achieved international fame with his drawings, paintings and designs for gobelin tapestry. He tried his hand as an actor once, playing Mercutio, and later appearing in his own film *Le Baron Fantôme*. Among his friends and collaborators he counted artists like Picasso, Diaghileff (for whom he also did ballet choreography), Pitoëff, Pascal Copeau. On the other hand he didn't think it below his dignity to keep company with the clowns and music-hall stars. In the early twenties he wrote for the Fratellinis the then sensational *Le Boeuf Sur Le Toit*.

"I turned to the circus and music-hall", he explains retrospectively, "to obtain a lesson in equilibrium".

This casual remark sums up best perhaps his dominating desire to experience everything at first hand, without relying



"L'éternel retour": the romantic and the ironic. Left, Jean Murat, Madeleine Sologne, Roland Toutain. Right, Yvonne de Bray, Jean d'Yd, Pieral.

on any formulæ established by others. And this goes as much for his artistic as for his private life.

Sitting in Jean Cocteau's little study, while he was still talking on the telephone, I was reminded of his manifold activities by some unfinished sculptures standing in the corner and by sketches of the most varied character pinned to the walls, apparently with no decorative purpose. A blackboard standing on an easel attracted my attention. Columns of disconnected words were scribbled on it in the poet's almost indecipherable writing. Each of them obviously stood for an idea that might have shot through his head and was worth retaining.

When Jean Cocteau came in to welcome me, he amazed me by a feat of memory quite unusual for a man of sixty-one who week after week meets hundreds of people of all walks of life. My face immediately reminded him of a question which I had put to him at a press conference in Knokke a year or so ago.

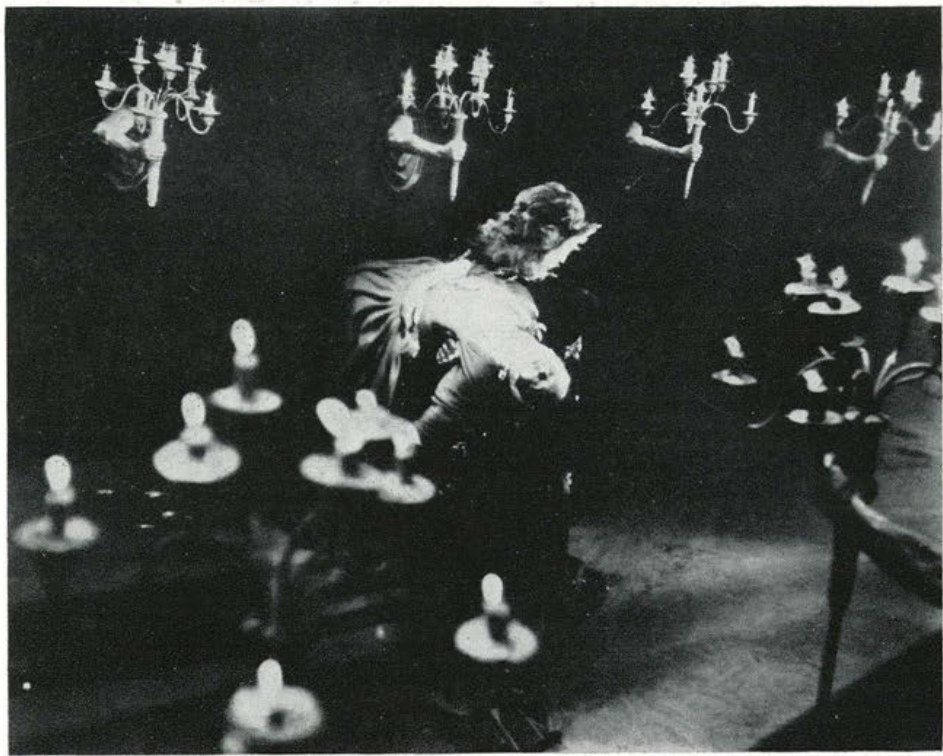
"I don't think I answered that question properly", he exclaimed. "You will probably find it ridiculous, but I am essentially a very shy person, and facing a crowd of journalists is for me something of an ordeal. That is why when you asked me, in how far I was thinking of the public when making a film, I was all confused and confined myself to some common-places.

"I am in fact trying subconsciously to visualise the effect of my images on the average spectator, but I am judging him by my own standards. I consider myself the best possible public, because when I am sitting in front of a stage or screen, I completely forget the whole world and identify myself with the characters of the play, trying at the same time not to miss the minutest detail. But I am, of course, not thinking of the kind of spectator who shuffles into the cinema in the middle of a film just to pass a few hours of his time, dividing his attention between the screen, a chat with his neighbour and the additional pleasure of sucking choc-ices.

"To my mind the public is as mysterious as the deep sea, and at the same comparable to a child who wants to be entertained at all costs. Stooping to their demands for facile pleasures would mean renouncing all ambitions to make of the cinema an art. You only need to look at the average radio programme, invariably based on the lowest common denominator, to find a confirmation of this truth.

"But so far I think that with most of my pictures I have attained the public for which I meant them. The best proof is that many of them have won prizes wherever the decision depended on the votes of the public. Indeed, the only prize awarded to me by a Jury was the *Prix Delluc*—for *La Belle Et La Bête*. On the other hand, the same film had been chosen for a prize by cinemagoers in San Francisco, and—among others—in China and in Japan . . ."

While Cocteau continues talking, underlining certain phrases with his long sensitive hands, the description of him given by Jean Béranger invades my mind: "Un poète avec un cœur pur et des yeux d'enfants penchés sur la féerie . . ." His face is in no way that of an old man, and his eyes have in



"*La belle et la bête*". Josette Day, Jean Marais.

fact the sparkle and fire of a child engrossed in a fairy tale. The fascinating flow of his speech has nothing to do with rhetoric. It reflects his native temperament, but it springs from mental alertness of such calibre that ideas seem always to be far ahead of words. There is no question of keeping the conversation within the bounds of a prepared scheme. Jean Cocteau seems to guess and answer my thoughts before I even have the time to formulate them properly. So, rambling from point to point and from one of his films to another, he allows me to catch a glimpse of the forces and ideas responsible for his incursion into the world of the cinema.

"Mind you", he says, "I am not what we call in French *un cinéaste*. I am *un poète cinématographique*. When I tried to express myself with the help of a chisel or a painter's brush, I did it essentially as an amateur, a poet trying any suitable medium to translate the mystery of his life into something tangible. And the same happens when I use the camera. That is why I firmly believe that a film worth making should be scripted, directed and edited, possibly even produced by the same person, the *créateur complet* as I like to call him. For me every shot and every sequence mean as much as words and phrases of a poem which must be properly correlated and co-ordinated. And so the personal style of the author counts at every stage of the production.

"One has, of course, to learn the rudiments of filmcraft—and more than that—to achieve that aim. But I certainly don't regret the time I spent learning . . . When I am making a film, I like to do everything myself: I often design the costumes and supervise their execution, I watch closely the execution of the decors, I even fiddle with the lights. All this is nowadays made very difficult by the innumerable trade union rules which are certainly not designed to help artistic achievement.

"I knew almost nothing about the cinema when in 1929 I began working on *Le Sang d'Un Poète*. But I had a vision of things which could only be expressed through the medium of



"Les parents terribles". Yvonne de Bray, Jean Marais.

the cinema. It was to be a realistic documentary of unreal happenings. I could never have achieved it, had I not been lucky in securing the help of Georges Périnal as cameraman and of Georges Auric for the musical illustration. I was concerned only with the lustre and detail of the images that emerged from this deep night of the human body. The film offers, of course, innumerable surfaces for interpretation. People often look at me with incredulity when I truthfully tell them that I could not possibly confirm or reject any of their interpretations, because they are entirely a matter of individual comprehension and appreciation, exactly as may be the case with most of Æsop's fables.

"My connection to the films I make is that of a cabinet-maker who builds a table. It is up to the 'consumer' to use the table as he thinks best, even for a spiritualistic seance. But why should the spirits which made the table turn consult the cabinet-maker?"

"And this is also my attitude towards poetry in films. I am moved by the desire to construct a vehicle for poetry, of which poetry may avail itself or not. But even to pronounce this magic word in a soft voice means to frighten poetry away . . ."

To-day Jean Cocteau recognises clearly the various mistakes committed in *Le Sang d'Un Poète*, and talks about them at length. His great love for beautiful images resulted in what he terms "almost agonising slowness." But André Gide advised him not to make any changes as in his opinion the film reflects faithfully the author's own rhythm and tempo at the time.

After this first attempt at screen poetry which caused quite a scandal in France at the time, thirteen years passed before (two minor screen adaptations apart) Cocteau actively took up filmwork again, turning the Tristan and Isolde legend into a film-script and entrusting Jean Delannoy with the direction. When *L'Eternel Retour* was shown in London after the war, it was generally considered as being permeated with

Germanic spirit; a reproach that was never quite understood either by the author or by the French critics.

There followed *La Belle et La Bête* directed by René Clément and *Ruy Blas* with Pierre Billon in charge. In making both these pictures Cocteau used the directors more like technical advisers and took a hand in directing himself, so that in years to come he would be able to assume full directorial responsibility in *L'Aigle à Deux Têtes*, *Les Parents Terribles*, and in *Orphée*. Thus his dream of becoming *créateur complet* had materialised.

"Whenever I am making a film, I find myself in a dreamlike trance. The outside world completely disappears and the dream life of the studio fills my whole existence. I sometimes go without food and drink, working 16 or 18 hours a day, and not feeling any strain, till the week-end brings a rude awakening and the usual Monday struggle to get back into the dream again.

"This was more than ever the case with *Orphée*, because in a certain sense this work means to me the fulfilment of those ambitions which once drove me

to attempt *Le Sang d'Un Poète* with no experience and insufficient technical means. Here, I felt, I wanted to express something that could not be expressed through any other medium but the cinema . . .

"And this is to my mind the real task of the film; to express ideas which cannot be adequately expressed by any other means. Used in that way the cinema can truly enrich our lives. It has definitely enriched mine! My written words would not have reached one hundredth of all those people who now write to me from all the corners of the world because they believe they know me through my images.

"I know that wherever my films are shown, people leaving the cinema argue furiously about what they have seen. I am glad about it and consider it a success because it means that I have stirred their thoughts and feelings. Many will misunderstand or dislike me, but this does not matter as long as my work", here a shade of irony creeps into his voice, "does not stop their mental development. After all, I dislike myself very often too! And where art is concerned—hostility is better than indifference".

To a few more specific questions regarding *Orphée* Cocteau replies without hesitation:

"I used the ancient legend only as a canvas on which to embroider a pattern of my own. I gave way to the fascination that the *pénombre* of mystery always holds for me, but I was far from attempting to give a solution of the mystery. I might just have uncovered some of the invisible ties that link life and death . . .

"On the last day of our work in the studio I was rather depressed and remarked that *Orphée* would probably not appeal to the public, whereupon our clapper-boy exclaimed: 'Why, Sir, after all everybody has some of his near ones among the dead!' I gladly took his remark as *vox populi*.

"The domestic complications arising when *Orphée* is

(Continued on page 255)



News

from . . .

LONDON

A scene from the Boulting Brothers' forthcoming picture, "Seven Days to Noon".

WITH THE SUMMER DOLDRUMS receding, the British film industry has been given a moral tonic by the announcement of an ambitious contribution to the 1951 Festival. This is the life of **William Friese-Green**, British cinema pioneer and inventor. The film will serve a double purpose: an important production in its own right, it will also bring to public notice Britain's early cinema achievements. A picture of this nature would be prohibitively expensive in the reduced circumstances of 1950, but the industry is pooling its resources for the production. It will probably be made in a Rank studio, but major distribution interests—Associated British-Pathé, British Lion, and the Granada group—have promised full support, and a long list of executives, producers, directors and scriptwriters have offered advice and assistance. The film, to be made in colour, will be produced by **Ronald Neame**, directed by **John Boulting**, and scripted by **Eric Ambler**.

There are other signs of increased activity and variety. **Michael Powell** and **Emery Pressburger**, in what no doubt is designed to be a kind of operatic follow-up to *The Red Shoes*, are making Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffman*: **Sir Thomas Beecham**, **Frederick Ashton** and **Hein Heckroth** are co-operating in their different spheres, and the cast reunites several names from the ballet picture—**Moirá Shearer**, **Leonid Massine**, **Robert Helpmann** and **Ludmilla Tcherina**. Another equally ambitious scheme is announced by **Sir Alexander Korda**: the filming of *The Sleeping Beauty*, in colour, with **Margot Fonteyn**. This will be the first time a full-length classical ballet has been allowed to stand on its own on the screen, and should be an interesting experiment.

Ealing have announced two forthcoming productions. The first will be *Pool of London*, to be shot in part on London locations: **Basil Dearden** directs, and the script is by **Jack Whittingham** and **John Eldredge** (the director of *Waverley Steps* and *Three Dawns to Sydney*, who has now joined

Ealing as an associate producer). This will be followed by *The Lavender Hill Mob* (director **Charles Crichton**, producer **Michael Truman**), described as the story of an insignificant bank official who succeeds in stealing a million pounds from the Bank of England.

After a period of activity in Australia, Ealing have now directed their attentions to South Africa, where **Harry Watt** is seeking inspiration. Other companies are looking in the same direction. *South Africa Story*, an adventure starring **Dennis Price** and **Jack Hawkins** (director **David Macdonald**, producer **Aubrey Baring**) is already under way. **Zoltan Korda** is to film **Alan Paton's** adaptation of his novel *Cry the Beloved Country* (which has already been seen in a musical version in New York). To be made on location in Natal and Johannesburg, with studio work in London, the film stars **Canada Lee** and will be photographed by **Robert Krasker**.

From various independents comes news of *The Galloping Major*, first production of the new company formed by **Henry Cornelius** and **Monja Danischewsky**—the story of a family which invests all its money in a race-horse: *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, to be produced by **Brian Desmond Hurst** and directed by **Gordon Parry**, with location work at Rugby during the summer holidays; and *Final Night*, a thriller with a newspaper office setting, starring **David Farrar** and **Claire Bloom**, a **Jay Lewis** production following his successful *Morning Departure*. Finally, the international *A Tale of Five Cities*, with five episodes set in various European capitals and designed to reflect contemporary life and conditions, has at last entered the final lap after being in production for over two years. The Berlin, Vienna and Rome episodes have been completed by a trio of directors, and **Montgomery Tully** has been assigned to deal with London and New York and assemble the whole. **Bonar Colleano** appears in every episode of this unpredictable marathon.

JAMES MORGAN

PARIS

Fernandel BELONGS to that class of actors, whose face and posture seen on the screen immediately provoke general hilarity. This is not only due to his great talent as a comedian, but also to an obvious association of ideas resulting from the long string of his comic pictures produced in the last twenty years or so.

All the more remarkable, therefore, is his decision to play a straight dramatic part in his new film *Meurtres*, an adaptation of Charles Plisnier's novel with dialogue written by **Henri Jeanson**. For him this is not so much a new venture as a return to his first cinema experiences, when—after being “discovered” by **Marcel Pagnol** on a music-hall stage—he played in films like *Regain*, *Angèle*, *Le Schpountz*, *Nais*. Nor was his rôle in *La Fille Du Puisatier* devoid of strong dramatic accents.

In *Meurtres*, as Noel, the modest and retiring gentleman-farmer, he is the “black sheep” of the extremely snobbish bourgeois family Annequin. Seeing the inhuman sufferings of his wife (**Line Noro**), who in the last stage of an incurable



Line Noro and Fernandel in “Meurtres”.

disease implores him to give her the *coup de grâce*, he fulfils her wish and accelerates with an injection the inevitable course of nature. When he discloses the truth to his brothers a respectable surgeon (**Raymond Souplex**) and an ambitious lawyer (**Jacques Varenne**), they are shocked to learn of his intention to give himself up to justice. Afraid of scandal, they have Noel interned in an asylum. It is only with the help of his young niece (**Jeanne Moreau**) who rebels against the hypocrisy of the Annequins, that he finally regains liberty and exposes his family to ridicule.

In an open letter to the Press, Fernandel declared that he was going to put into this part “all his sensitivity and all the power of his feeling” so as to win over the public that has grown used to see in him only a clown. The picture is directed by **Richard Pottier**, who has about two dozen films to his credit, but has so far never accomplished a really distinguished work. This may be his chance.

Another adaptation of a well-known book is at present being handled by **Robert Bresson**, the director responsible for

Les Anges Du Peché and *Les Dames Du Bois De Boulogne*. He has not only scripted *Le Journal D'Un Curé De Campagne*, the Catholic writer **Bernanos'** most important novel, but is also directing the picture, which is being shot almost entirely on location, in a small village of the Pas-de-Calais region, where the action of the book is set.

It is a pathetic, simple story of a young village priest, whose enthusiastic faith struggles in vain against the villainy and indifference of his parishioners. According to the author “the exterior action reflects only the interior development” of the principal character. Respecting the spirit of the work, Robert Bresson has chosen a cast without star names and with several non-professionals. The *Curé* himself is played by a young Swiss actor, **Claude Laydu**, who takes his part (the first big rôle he has ever had) very seriously. In order to get acquainted with the background of ecclesiastical life he joined a college for young priests in Paris and lived there for some time before the shooting of the film began.

The genuine atmosphere of French country life may become the main attraction of this picture, based on a very low budget and a great deal of enthusiasm.

A lot will also depend on the liveliness of the unglamourised



“Journal d'un cure de campagne”. Claude Laydu.

local colour in the film *Trois Télégrammes*, shot at present by **Henri Decoin** (the director of *Entre Onze Heures Et Minuit*, recently shown in London). This time it is the picturesque district of Paris around *rue Mouffetard* that forms the background to the story of a little messenger boy who loses three telegrams in a street accident, and of his frantic efforts to recover them before his failure is discovered.

Apart from a few grown-up characters played by actors, the main stars of the picture are children with very little or no previous acting experience at all. The leading part of the messenger boy is played by 14-year-old **Gerard Gervais**, who has had already small parts in one or two films. But 11-year-old **Pierrette Simonnet** has never been before a camera in her life, and 8-year-old **Bernard Plumet**, a butcher's son, was picked up by the film's script-writer, **Alex Joffre**, while playing on the staircase of a block of flats. Henri Decoin has no desire to make child prodigies out of any of them. If they give the picture the freshness of their own lives, its purpose will be achieved.

FRANCIS KOVAL



HOLLYWOOD

AMERICAN FILM-MAKERS continue to tackle sociological subjects: in the last few years we have seen pictures on anti-semitism and negro prejudice, on insanity and disease. One of the latest contributions, shortly to be seen in London, is *No Way Out*, directed by **Joseph Mankiewicz** (who made *Letter to Three Wives* and *House of Strangers*). This is the story of a young negro doctor, played by **Sidney Poitier**, who operates on a white man: the operation fails, the patient dies, and his brother demands a trial for the negro. Other players include **Richard Widmark** (above left, with Sidney Poitier) and **Dots Johnson** (right), who played the negro G.I. in *Paisa*.

Caged (below) is an account of conditions in a women's

prison. The main character, a young girl (**Eleanor Parker**) is committed to the prison for a minor offence, corrupted and embittered there, and the final implication, on her release, is that she has hardened into an inveterate criminal and will be returning shortly. The film, which is entered for the Venice Festival, would seem to mark a re-entry of Warner Brothers into the sociological field—this company having pioneered it in the 30's with *I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang*, *They Won't Forget* and many others. Other players include **Agnes Moorehead** (prison administrator), **Hope Emerson** (a brutal wardress), **Lee Patrick**, **Jan Sterling**, and **Ellen Corby** (inmates).



DR. GOEBBELS AT THE CINEMA

(1) Extracts from the Diaries

No one, perhaps, realised the propagandist power of the cinema, direct and indirect, with such intensity as Dr. Goebbels: as Hitler's Minister of Propaganda he organised the German film industry as a potent expressive outlet of the Nazi myth. The brilliance of the 1936 Olympic Games film, the savagely dramatic compilation films, *Baptism of Fire* and *Victory in the West*, are eloquent testimony of this.

These extracts from the Goebbels Diaries (translated by Louis P. Lochner, published here by Hamish Hamilton Ltd.) show Goebbels as a shrewd observer of world cinema during the war, and a tireless watchdog of his own.

The second article in this feature, *The Strange Story of "Titanic"*, tells by contrast of an odd experiment by Goebbels that did not come off, but had a partial boomerang success. The Doctor's deeds live after him.



The cult of the hero: a scene from Leni Riefenstahl's "1936 Olympiad".

"Film production is flourishing almost unbelievably despite the war. What a good idea of mine it was to have taken possession of the films on behalf of the Reich several years ago! It would be terrible if the high profits now being earned by the motion-picture industry were to flow into private hands".

Jan. 22, 1942

"I saw the new American propaganda film, *The Foreign Correspondent*. It is a first class production, a criminological bang-up hit, which no doubt will make a certain impression upon the broad masses of the people in enemy countries. Significantly enough this film, with its absolutely anti-German tendency, was allowed to run for months in Sweden. The Swedes and the Swiss are playing with fire. Let us hope that they will burn their fingers before this war is over".

Jan. 22, 1942

"I took a look at the Italian Gigli motion picture, *The Tragedy of Love*, the artistic level of which is so far below the normal that it really ought to be prohibited. The Italians are not only not doing anything about the war effort, but they are hardly producing anything worth-while in the realm of the arts. One might almost say that fascism has reacted upon the creative life of the Italian people somewhat like sterilization . . .

"It is, after all, nothing like National Socialism. While the latter goes deep down to the roots, fascism is only a superficial thing. That is regrettable, but one must recognise it clearly. National Socialism is really a way of life. It always

begins at the beginning and lays new foundations for life. That's why our task is so difficult, but always so beautiful, and the goal ahead is well worth our best effort".

Feb. 6, 1942

"In the evening I had a look at the Polish-Yiddish motion picture, *The Dybuk*. This film is intended to be a Jewish propaganda picture. Its effect, however is so anti-semitic that one can only be surprised to note how little the Jews know about themselves and how little they realise what is repulsive to a non-Jewish person and what is not. Looking at this film I realised once again that the Jewish race is the most dangerous one that inhabits this globe, and that we must show them no mercy and no indulgence. This riff-raff must be eliminated and destroyed. Otherwise it won't be possible to bring peace to the world".

Feb. 18, 1942

"The Italians are causing us difficulties in various ways. Now they are trying to horn in on the newly-founded film industry at Bucharest, which was really to be our field. Of course they are doing it with insufficient means, but nevertheless they would like to keep their fingers in the pie. There isn't much to be done about it for the moment".

Feb. 20, 1942

"In the evening I viewed the Russian Bolshevik film, *Suvarov*. It is a decidedly nationalistic film, in which the Bolsheviks try to establish a connection between the Russia of today and the old heroic history of the country. Certain passages in the film are childishly naive, as though a twelve-

year-old had shot the scenes. Other passages, again, are of extraordinary vitality. There are lots of possibilities latent in the Russians. If they were really to be organised thoroughly as a people they would undoubtedly represent the most tremendous danger possible for Europe. That must be prevented, and that is one of the objectives we must attain during the pending offensive. May God grant us success!"

March 21, 1942

"Dr. Hermann Winkler, a German industrialist had been a democratic member of the Prussian Diet, but in 1933 became a Nazi. He assisted in the Nazification of German newspapers, acting as a go-between for the publishers and the Propaganda Ministry. Later Goebbels entrusted him with many of the financial deals of his ministry, especially those having to do with the motion picture industry which was taken over entirely by Goebbels on behalf of the Reich".

April 1, 1942

Footnote by Louis Lochner. Editor.

"Italian films in Germany are netting the Italians much more money than our German films net us in Italy. The fact is gradually causing us some foreign-exchange difficulties. The UFA has worked up a new export plan whereby we can gradually lay our hands on the entire Italian film export in Europe. I hope the Italians fall for it".

April 23, 1942

"All motion-picture producers visited me. In the evening we see the American Technicolor picture *Swanee River*, which affords me an opportunity for making a number of observations on the creation of a new German film based on folk songs. The fact of the matter is that the Americans have the ability of taking their relatively small stock of culture and by a modernised version to make of it something that is very *à propos* for the present time. We are loaded down altogether too much with tradition and piety. We hesitate to clothe our cultural heritage in a modern dress. It therefore remains purely historical or museum-like and is at best understood by



"Baptism of Fire": a Nazi airman.



"Ohm Kruger", a Nazi film about the Boer war, depicting a greedy, corrupt British monarchy, personified here by Queen Victoria, and Emil Jannings as President Kruger.

groups within the Party, the Hitler Youth, or the Labour Service. The cultural heritage of our past can be rendered fruitful for the present on a large scale only if we present it with modern means. The Americans are masters at this sort of thing, I suppose, because they are not weighed down as much as we are with historical ballast. Nevertheless we shall have to do something about it. The Americans have only a few Negro songs, but they present them in such a modern way that they conquer large parts of the modern world which is, of course, very fond of such melodies. We have a much greater fund of cultural goods, but we have neither the artistry nor the will to modernise them. That will have to be changed".

May 3, 1942

"I took a look at another French film, *Annette et la Dame Blonde*. It is of the same levity and elegance as the Darrieux movie *Caprices*. We shall have to be careful about the French so that they won't build up a new moving-picture art under our leadership that will give us too serious competition in the European market. I shall see to it that especially talented French film actors are gradually engaged for the German cinema.

(Footnote by Lochner: Goebbels, as many entries in his diary indicate, was determined to give Germany a virtual monopoly in motion pictures, and to subordinate Italian and French production to German. His handy man, Winkler, had some crafty plan for cheating the Italians out of the fruits of their labours; Goebbels here revealed his plan for hoodwinking



Leni Riefenstahl. "Became ill from overwork and worry . . ."

the French by buying off their best actors.) May 13, 1942

"In the evening we viewed a new motion picture produced by our Continental-Gesellschaft in Paris after a scenario written around the life and activity of Hector Berlioz. The film is of excellent quality and amounts to a first-class national fanfare. I shall unfortunately not be able to release it for public showing.

I am very angry to think that our own offices in Paris are teaching the French how to represent nationalism in pictures. This lack of political instinct can hardly be beaten. But that's the way we Germans are. Whenever we go into another country, be it ever so strange to us or even an enemy, our first task seems to consist in getting order into that country regardless of the fact that perhaps in several years or decades it may go to war against us. The lack of political instinct among the Germans is the result of their passion for work and of their idealistic enthusiasm. You have to put on the brakes constantly so that evil and damaging consequences may not result.

I ordered Greven to come to Berlin from Paris, to give him absolutely clear and unmistakable directions to the effect that for the moment, so far as the French are concerned, only light and frothy, and, if possible, corny pictures are desired. No doubt the French people will be satisfied with that too. There is no reason why we should cultivate their nationalism.

All actors of more than average talent in the French movies should, as far as possible, be hired by us for German film

production. I see no other possibility of achieving a satisfactory result in this matter. We might well worry about the consequences that might result if we did not take a hand.

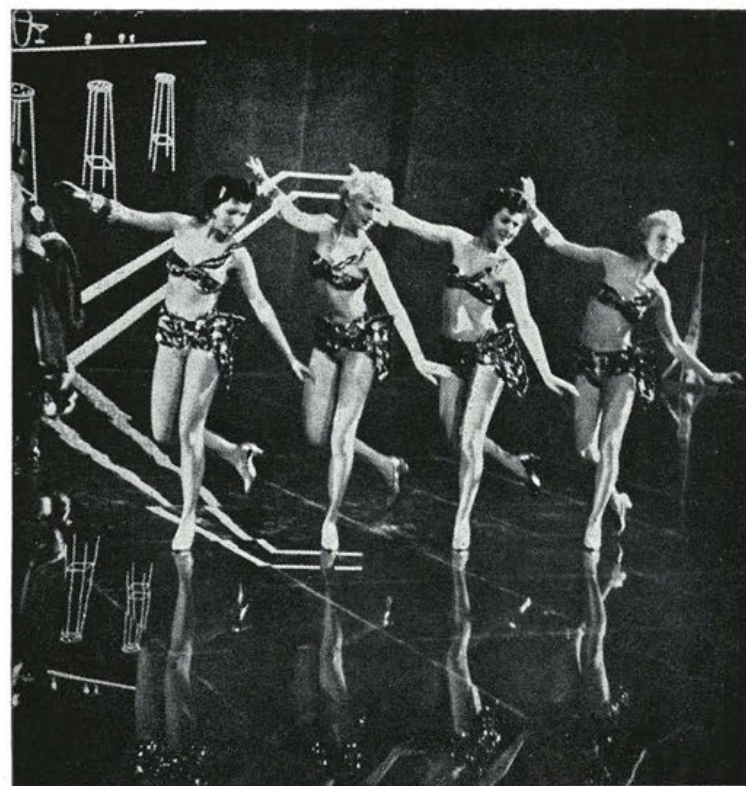
As citizens of the world, we Germans have as yet no vision. We grew up as the product of many little states, and that's why we lack the necessary political practice and experience. We shall now have to catch up in a very few years on what we have missed in centuries". May 15, 1942

"In the afternoon I had a long argument with Hippler (Hippler was evidently an employee in the motion-picture section of the Propaganda Ministry) and with Greven about the aims to be pursued in our French film production. Greven has an entirely wrong technique in that he has regarded it as his task to raise the level of the French movie. That is wrong. It isn't our job to supply the Frenchmen with good pictures and it is especially not our task to give them movies that are beyond reproach in their nationalistic tendency.

"If the French people on the whole are satisfied with light, corny stuff, we ought to make it our business to produce such cheap trash. It would be a case of lunacy for us to promote competition against ourselves. We must proceed in our movie policies as the Americans do in their policies toward the North and South American continents. We must become the dominating movie power on the European continent. In so far as pictures are produced in other countries they must be only of a local character. It must be our aim to prevent so far as possible the founding of any new national film industry, and if necessary to hire for Berlin, Vienna or Munich such stars and technicians as might be in a position to help in this. After I talked to him for a long time Greven realised the wisdom of this course and will pursue it in future".

May 19, 1942

"Leni Riefenstahl reported to me about her motion picture,



"The people want solace for their souls . . . "Typical solace provided by Liebeneiner: "Gross-stadmelodie" ("Big Town Melody").

and *Tiefland*. It has become involved in innumerable complications. Already more than 5,000,000 marks have been wasted on this film and it will take another whole year before it is finished. Frau Reifensahl has become very ill from overwork and worry, and I urged her earnestly to go on leave before taking up further work. I am glad I have nothing to do with the unfortunate case, and hence bear no responsibility”.

(*Leni Riefensahl, glamorous artist of the ski, attracted Hitler's attention by her winter and mountain pictures. He placed her in charge of directing all pictures made for German propaganda during the 1936 Olympic Games. Tiefland was an opera by Eugen d'Albert which was very popular in Germany.*)

December 16, 1942

“In the evening I saw a Bolshevik propaganda picture, *One Day in the Soviet Union*. This film is a first-class piece of agitation, although anyone who really knows conditions can easily contradict it. Undoubtedly it will be effective in neutral and enemy countries, as it was cleverly adapted to their mentality. It seems rather significant to me that this picture is running unchallenged in Sweden with Swedish captions. That's how low the so-called Nordic states have sunk!

“This film, however, once more made it clear to me that we have to be exceptionally careful about Bolshevism. Russia is not a bourgeois but a proletarian Jewish state. If we don't exert every effort it may someday overrun us. Our slogan should be, now more than ever: “Total War is The Imperative Need of the Hour”.

March 4, 1943

“In the afternoon the twenty-fifth anniversary of UFA was celebrated. Klitzsch delivered a long but interesting speech about the history of UFA. He showed how exceedingly hard a few patriots had to fight against Jewish-American efforts at control of the German motion picture during System Time. I was able to announce a number of honours conferred by the Fuehrer. Hugenberg received the Eagle Shield, Klitzsch and Winkler the Goethe Medal, and Liebeneiner and Harlan appointments as professors. As these honours had been kept secret they made the men distinguished very happy. Hugenberg was simply flabbergasted at the public tribute paid him. I treated him with special friendliness and courtesy and made a deep impression on him.

“Late at night I went for a short visit to Professor Froelich (*Professor Carl Froelich was president of the Reich Film Chamber*). All the big shots of the UFA were assembled there. They were very happy that I sat down with them for an hour . . . People on the whole are of good will. That applies even to the intelligentsia. All you have to do is to

handle them right and give them support in these difficult times. After all, they have a right to this. One would sometimes like to split oneself into a million parts to take a hand wherever necessary. But unfortunately one is always only a single person”.

(*The UFA (Universal Film Aktiengesellschaft) was Germany's largest motion-picture concern. Its executive director was Dr. Ludwig Klitzsch; its principal stockholder Dr. Alfred Hugenberg. Winkler was a go-between with the motion-picture industry and negotiator of contracts with foreign countries. Wolfgang Liebeneiner and Veit Harlan were two popular movie stars. The title of professor was a coveted one in Germany, and did not necessarily signify that its holder was engaged in academic activity. The Nazis always referred to the period of the Weimar Republic (1919-33) as “System Time”.*)

March 5, 1943

“Rosenberg criticised our motion-picture production in a letter to me. I could give him a stiff answer by criticising conditions in the East, but I won't do it because the whole matter seems too unimportant to me. At any rate I should have thought that Rosenberg would worry about other things than about this or that movie that did not turn out successfully”.

May 15, 1943

“A Hollywood film about the Soviet Union, based on the book, *Mission to Moscow*, by the former American Ambassador in Moscow, Davies, has created a sensation in the United States. It pleads for friendship with the Soviet Union in such an evil-smelling manner that even the American people are protesting”.

May 19, 1943

“Our representatives have negotiated with representatives of the Italian Government in Venice about German-Italian film relations. The Italian Fascists are actually planning to start a new production in Venice. Obviously they still haven't learned anything. Instead of fighting a war they are taking time out for minor questions. I imagine that if we were in as desperate a situation as the Italians, we would have something else to do than build film studios. I shall certainly see to it that Italian motion pictures don't enter Germany for the present”.

November 17, 1943

“It's surprising that the theatres and cinemas have opened their doors again and that the people fairly stream into them. There are queues before all the motion-picture houses. People crave recreation after the gruelling days and nights of the past week. They want solace for their souls . . .”

November 29, 1943

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THE STRANGE STORY OF "TITANIC"

H. H. Wollenberg



"Titanic": the shipwreck.

THREE MONTHS AGO news came from Germany that the film *Titanic*, produced in 1943, was being shown in the U.S. zone and was attracting large crowds. It was well-known in Britain that, on Goebbels' instructions, this Nazi version of the Titanic disaster of 1912 was conceived and executed as an anti-British propaganda vehicle. It seemed almost unbelievable that, even allowing for cuts and a slightly neutralised version, a film with such a record should—roughly five years after the Nazi collapse—be exploited for commercial purposes. This film, like all other Nazi productions, had rightly been banned by the Allied authorities. Last year, however, all film censorship was handed back to the Germans who, for the three Western zones, established their own censorship board, the "Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der deutschen Filmwirtschaft" in Wiesbaden. This board is supposed to consist of people with a clean record. On the application of a distributor, *Titanic* was passed by this board for public exhibition in the American zone and started its successful run in Munich and other places in South Germany. Resulting from strong British action the matter was taken up at high level and ultimately the film was banned once and for all throughout the three Western Zones by the Allied High Commission. Following upon this action the German Censorship Committee stated that they had not found any anti-British tendency in the film as submitted to them. At Bonn, the Federal Vice-Chancellor, Herr Blucher,

was reported to have said that, by the ban, the problem of intellectual freedom was affected.

This event, however, constitutes but one phase in the extraordinary fate of this particular film, a fate which undoubtedly contributes a chapter to any comprehensive history of the cinema. The following facts are based on statements published in the German press.

To begin with, it is particularly interesting to note that this is not the first time that the film itself has been banned in Germany. In point of fact, it had never been shown to the German public until March of this year. Under the Nazi regime it was banned by Dr. Goebbels himself immediately on completion. In 1943, the director Herbert Selpin was commissioned to make *Titanic* for anti-British propaganda purposes. Trouble started during production. There are various stories as to its causes. One is that Selpin had serious quarrels with the naval authorities at the port of Gdynia where the location scenes were being filmed. Another version is that Selpin was deviating far too much from the original anti-British line. In any case the directorship of the film was taken out of his hands and transferred to Werner Klingler. He completed the wholly anti-British product expected by the Propaganda Ministry. The film was officially recognised as "politically valuable to the State". ("Staatspolitisch wertvoll"). Selpin himself was imprisoned and placed before a Nazi



"Titanic". John J. Astor and Capt. E. J. Smith.

into taking this disastrous course. In the film the character and responsibilities of the Captain (played by Otto Wernicke) are left in doubt, but he is given credit for keeping calm while organising the rescue operations and maintaining the true traditions of the sea. One of the major parts in the film portrays John J. Astor, the millionaire. His character is completely distorted. He is shown as an unscrupulous profiteer who wants to buy the liner and tries by every means to depreciate the value of the Company's shares. The truth is that Astor displayed a noble courage; he took final leave of his wife with a smile and words of encouragement, after which he stayed behind and went down with the liner.

Stylistically, the film, which cost several million marks, is a work of high technical skill. The scenes of the shipwreck, the panic, the rescue, are admirably staged. The vivid contrast between luxury and gay life aboard ship being suddenly transformed into a scene of stark tragedy is, in itself, highly dramatic.

tribunal. He was charged with having voiced defeatist ideas. Whether he was killed by the Gestapo or forced to take his own life will never be established.

What is even more puzzling than the tragedy of Selpin is the remarkable fact that, although this film in its final form had received the highest Nazi blessing, it was never allowed to be shown in Germany regardless of the enormous sum spent on production. It has been hinted in the German press that German shipping interests were largely responsible for bringing pressure to bear upon the Propaganda Ministry. They felt that the most realistic presentation of a liner's catastrophe, whether British or not, was bound to act as a boomerang and severely shatter the German public's confidence in their Merchant Service. In any case the obvious reason for banning the film was the effect it would have on the nerves of German audiences already strained to breaking point.

Now let us compare some historical facts of the *Titanic* disaster with the story and characters as presented in the German film, according to the German press.

The White Star liner "Titanic" was making her maiden voyage to New York when, on April 14th, 1912, at approximately 10 p.m., she struck an iceberg. She sank in a very short time, taking with her fifteen hundred persons, mainly men. Almost all women and children were rescued. The findings of the official enquiry into the disaster came to the conclusion that the number of lifeboats supplied to so large a ship was too small. The Director of the White Star Line, Mr. Joseph B. Ismay, one of the few male survivors (the principal villain of the Nazi film version), was accused of insisting on taking the Northern Atlantic Route, despite warnings of icebergs, as it was his ambition to gain the Blue Riband for the liner. He firmly denied having brought any influence to bear on the Master of the *Titanic*, Capt. E. J. Smith, who went down with his ship. Ismay resigned from the White Star Company in 1913. In the film version the disaster was forced upon the ship by his ruthless desire for profit; for, by gaining the coveted Blue Riband, he hoped to force up the value of his Company's shares. So he bribed the Captain, against his better nature,

The cast, comprising well-known German talent in the leading parts, includes in minor roles Charlotte Tiedemann, now the Duchess of Segovia in real life, as a young mother, and Monika Burg, now known as Claude Farell, the French film actress, as a manicurist on the ship.

The recent banning of this film is by no means the end of the "Titanic" story. On April 7th, it had its première simultaneously in two cinemas in the Russian Sector of Berlin and has since been widely shown all over the Soviet Zone. Its appeal is so great that, for instance, one cinema at Halle gave seven performances in one day. Publicity for the film, incidentally, avoids any reference to its being Nazi. Emphasis is placed rather on its anti-capitalist outlook. Quotations from a leading Berlin Film Weekly will give a more concrete picture of the film as it is being shown in Berlin and the rest of the Soviet Zone. The paper quotes:

"The version now released in the Eastern Zone is obviously the same as that approved by the Wiesbaden Censorship Committee. Anyway, a scene where British people are rescued while Germans are left to drown is not included. After the liner has been shattered by the iceberg, the captain gives orders for the women and children to take to the boats while the men are ordered to remain on board. He even refuses any preference to the President of the White Star Company. Although the rescue action itself is conducted in the traditions of honour and decency, one cannot fail to notice from the film as a whole that its idea and scenario are directed by a political-propagandist tendency. So-called capitalists and speculators are shown in that naive and superficial manner to which we are now accustomed from the products of pseudo-Socialist dictators. . . . The film is running to capacity in every cinema in the Eastern Sector of Berlin: this doesn't mean a lot since any non-Russian film is good box-office here". . .

After all this, one cannot fail to realise the boomerang effect, already mentioned, of Nazi propaganda methods. This appears to be the general lesson to be learned from the *Titanic* story. It has not yet ended.

Film of the Month

PANIC IN THE STREETS

Gavin Lambert



"Panic in the Streets": the chase through the docks of New Orleans. Walter Palance and Zero Mostel.

THE DEVELOPMENT of what has come to be known as the semi-documentary style in feature films—the dramatising of actual events on actual locations—apparently occurred simultaneously and independently in Italy and Hollywood. De Rochemont produced *The House on 92nd Street* in 1945, 13 Rue Madeleine in 1946, *Boomerang* in 1947. Rossellini made *Open City* in 1945, de Sica made *Sciuscia* in 1946. Since that time, the style has become both popular (in America) and artistically fashionable (in Europe): the technique in Europe has been shaped to such diverse ends as *Bataille du Rail*, *The Last Chance*, *Antoine et Antoinette*, *Paisa*, *Il Miracolo* and, of course, *Bicycle Thieves*. In America it has produced a series of accomplished melodramas—*Kiss of Death*, *Street with No Name*, *The Naked City*, *Call Northside 777* and so on—that are not so easily distinguishable by personal or human qualities, and can be judged comparatively, rather, by their technical skill and ability to sustain tension.

It would seem, in fact, that in Europe the style has grown out of various kinds of material, but that in America it has grown out of only one kind. There is a further distinction: the material of de Sica, of Lindtberg, of Rossellini, is first-

hand, and their films consequently communicate a first-hand experience. In America, from *The House on 92nd Street* onwards, the material has basically the second-hand quality of a newspaper cutting, of an incident ripe with drama brought out from the files. The vividness of these films, in varying degrees, has been due to the talents of scriptwriters and directors who infuse direct observation or feeling into the stories, and to resourceful camerawork which in some cases brilliantly simulates the textures of everyday life. The American films have remained within the confines of melodrama, subjecting the investigation of character to its demands. This is not to denigrate melodrama, a valid and entertaining pursuit, as such: but it has meant that the new "authenticity" achieved by filming these stories in actual streets, towns and rooms has remained on the surface. There has been no real creative revolution. One feels that the tradition itself is inhibiting when, for a subject like *All the King's Men*, Robert Rossen takes great care to shoot many of his interiors as well as all his exteriors on location and still produces a film littered with studio clichés—or when a film like *The Big Lift*, though made entirely in Germany, gains only incidental detail from this, and fails to penetrate the



Some characters from "Panic in the Streets". Top to bottom: Barbara Bel Geddes and Richard Widmark; the Armenian cafe-owner and his plague-stricken wife; Mrs. Fitch (Mary Liswood) trying to persuade her frightened husband (Zero Mostel) to escape; Blackie (Walter Palance), the gangleader, an old woman, and a dwarfed newspaper vendor.



surface. All in all, one doubts whether this partial retreat from the studios in America is in itself a liberating influence, as it has undoubtedly proved itself to be in Europe.

Panic in the Streets, the latest melodrama in this style, is directed by Elia Kazan, who four years ago made one of the first examples for de Rochemont, *Boomerang*. It turns out to be perhaps the best of the whole cycle, and at times it nearly breaks the bonds of its own conventions. For it has not only a particularly good story, but a sharpness and flexibility of observation in the writing and handling that occasionally makes it more than a melodrama about a city under the threat of plague—it promises to become a real account of people in this circumstance, instead of using the circumstance to heighten tension.

The story tells of an unidentified petty crook found shot on the New Orleans waterfront: the Public Health Department is called in, and Dr. Reed (Richard Widmark) finds the man to have been infected with bubonic plague. Reed insists that, to avoid panic, the news must be kept secret: all the local crooks who might be involved must be rounded up, the victim and his murderer identified, their movements reconstructed, and everyone who might have been exposed to the infection isolated. The chief of the homicide squad (Paul Douglas) is at first opposed to Reed's point of view, and obeys orders grudgingly. Reed, impatient at his methods, decides to investigate on his own: he traces the dead man to a ship which turns out to be rat-infested and to have had a case of plague on board, then to a quayside restaurant, where the frightened proprietor professes ignorance. But the next day the proprietor's wife is dead from the plague. The murderer and his accomplice are finally tracked and caught after a chase through the dockside warehouses and along the quay.

Although the mainspring of the film is its physical tension, the search by the doctor and the police for the criminals, and the latter's manoeuvres, the situation itself allows for a welcome variation of emphasis, of which the scriptwriter Richard Murphy (who wrote *Boomerang* and *Cry of the City*) and Kazan take full advantage. They touch on many aspects—rivalries and doubts within the city services (public health, city council, police), the stonewalling of an inquisitive reporter and the problem of what to do with him when he discovers the truth, the suspicion, hostility and fear of numerous people directly or indirectly involved in the case, the dangerous curiosity of bystanders. A brilliantly recreated cross-section of the New Orleans underworld moves across the screen—a soft-spoken but brutal gangleader, his nervous and intriguing accomplices, a dwarf news vendor who acts as informer, shady hotel and restaurant proprietors, greedy wives and girlfriends, tenement inhabitants: the doctor himself is given depth and character by some acutely written domestic scenes, in which the atmosphere of strain and affection is cleverly conveyed and heightened by a beautiful performance from Barbara Bel Geddes as the wife: the homicide squad chief is made a lonely, rather bitter person: the mounting hysteria of the gangleader's accomplice is acidly described. The script is full of detail and shrewdness, and Kazan's handling of it often fascinating to watch—a brilliantly refined skill that is never ostentatious, and at the same time more personal than, for instance, the flashy strokes of Dassin.

Both Widmark and Paul Douglas play excellently, and the small parts are filled by a number of little known professional actors (notably Zero Mostel, who used to be a "B" picture comedian) and some non-professionals picked on the spot. The camerawork by Joe Macdonald has all the atmosphere and depth one has come to expect from him, and there is a telling absence (except for the credits and the fade-out) of background music.

It is the chase at the end, flawlessly contrived though it is, that reminds us we have been watching a masterly entertainment and not a concentrated account of human beings in a particular crisis. Under the circumstances this remark may seem ungracious: but remembering that Kazan has proved himself able on the stage to treat such ambitious subjects as *Death of a Salesman* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and that the technique of this kind of film has become so highly developed in America, *Panic in the Streets* cannot be regarded as more than a distinguished exercise in style. In a way, the more brilliantly it is done, the more one becomes aware of the limitations.

MUSIC: CONGRESS AT FLORENCE

Antony Hopkins

I HAD NEVER been to Florence. But then I don't believe that the disillusioned and bitter cynic who said "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive" had ever been there either. I stepped out of the plane at Milan airport after a breathtaking flight over the dazzling white snowfields of the Alps; the heat hit one like a tangible blow, cutting at once through the cloth of one's coat. My eyes were still blinking away the mirror-like reflection of the sunlight on Silvana Mangano's rice-fields, over which we had flown a minute or two before; and as we sat in the long Italian bus, the unexpected North Country voices around me discussing, of all things, cranes, I felt again that strange feeling of disbelief that air travel always provokes in me. I am sure the traveller was never before so conscious of the essential sameness *within*; drop me suddenly upon the moon and still I will carry within me that small island of "myself" which does not change, wherever I may be.

My ears, still lethargic after the great height we had flown, scarcely heard the excited cries of my fellow Englishmen on seeing one of "their" cranes towering over a huge building project. I stayed the night near the incredible Duomo, most sublime standard-bearer of the Coca-Cola industry's banner; and my sleep, if sleep it could be called, was disturbed by the most refined piece of torture that I have so far met on the Continent—a repeating clock. At each quarter it chimed the full hour, and then one, two or three high-pitched tings according to which quarter it was. Thus between the hours of midnight and one a.m. it chimes a total of 55 times—enough to satisfy the most ardent Catholic.

The next day I was in Florence, and found in my hotel room a magnificent pile of travel leaflets, a vast programme of the Maggio Musicale, and a staggeringly beautiful volume of photographs of the great Baptistery doors, "the Gates of Paradise". There were, however, no instruction as to where I was to go, or when I was required to be there, and inquiry at the hotel desk proved vain. Armed with my Italian phrase-book I sallied forth bravely: "Dove se trova il congresso internazionale di musica?" The police seemed ill-informed, and ultimately directed me to the Florentine equivalent of Keith Prowse where I queued for some time, apparently to get tickets for Duke Ellington. Attempts to by-pass the queue were greeted with storms of protest that my phrase-book was ill-prepared to meet; and attempts to fraternize with an obviously American girl of remarkable beauty were chilled off in icy Florentine. So for two hours I walked alone in Florence, gazing in awe-struck wonder at one architectural

masterpiece after another, till I arrived by chance at the Teatro Communale. Here I was received with open arms by a charming Italian, and informed that I was just in time for the first session. The Congress had begun.

I should perhaps explain that I had been invited to speak at an International Music Congress on "Irony and Humour in Film Music"; but during the week composers, critics and directors from many countries were due to read papers on a variety of subjects to do with music and the cinema. To attempt to deal with all these individually would take up more space than there is in the whole of this issue, but I will attempt to deal with some of the points I found outstanding. Once I had arrived there, the Congress was, in fact, extremely well organised. The delegates were able to illustrate their talks with films excellently projected and with good sound; also provided were a radiogram, piano and so on, and an extremely gifted woman interpreter. But what a thankless task she had; can there be anything more depressing to both parties than to have to sit through a translation into French of a speech one has just heard in Italian? Most speakers made the mistake of reading papers at a tremendous speed, trying to pack into their brief fifteen minutes material for an hour's lecture; and it was with some apprehension that I set a precedent by speaking *ad lib*. (I feel that if an audience has to listen to an incomprehensible tongue for a quarter of an hour, at least they might as well be edified by a lively expression on the speaker's countenance, rather than gaze fixedly at the top of his head.)

Twenty-three papers were presented to the Congress, of which I did not hear all. But outstanding among the examples of films were those showing the work of Yves Baudrier. He showed us in particular an extract from *Les Maudits* which for the underplaying of sadism with the maximum of effect would be hard to excel. Readers of SIGHT AND SOUND may remember my comments on Epstein's film *Le Tempestaire*, for which Baudrier also provided the score. In both films, there is an incredible economy of musical resources. This composer can do more with one bass clarinet or a string quartet than most Hollywood composers can do with an orchestra of ninety. This economy, on which I commented in my own talk, was generally approved by the Congress; speaker after speaker attacked the principles of "too much music, too heavily scored". This mood reached its climax when Daniele Amfitheatrof showed us fourteen examples of American film-music. These ranged from *Song of Bernadette* to *Sunset Boulevard*, but Mr. Amfitheatrof apologised for

a preponderance of scenes of violence, as the composers on the whole had preferred to choose passages showing their use of the full resources of the orchestra.

The Congress sat in stunned silence while reel after reel of high-powered music was blared out; only Copland's music to *The Red Pony* was vociferously applauded. To hear such a concentration of this type of music was frankly an appalling experience; and again we saw those extraordinary words "The music composed by —, orchestrated by —". I had already in my talk, publicly asked Mr. Amphitheatrof to explain this curious dichotomy so fashionable in America, but he dismissed my request in his introductory talk, as "involving too wide issues to be discussed here". However, after this shattering experience, the chairman, Pizzetti, pinned him down on this very point; the explanation was, "on purely financial grounds". Mr. Amphitheatrof went on to explain that so many millions of dollars were tied up in a film, that producers could not wait while one man went through the arduous process of composing and scoring the music, and that a division of labour halved the time involved in waiting for completion of the score. He went on to defend this extraordinary course by expatiating on the virtues and talents of the arrangers. I do not think he realised that of this the Congress had little doubt; this music is orchestration run riot, but little else.

The next morning Benjamin Frankel opened a discussion on the American contributions. With great courage and forthrightness he attacked in no uncertain terms the bulk of the music we had heard the previous evening. Brushing aside all chances of receiving a Hollywood contract, he spoke scathingly of the appalling taste shown in the music of *Song of Bernadette*, which he described as "in my opinion, a depth of vulgarity beyond which it is not possible to sink". The moment Frankel finished speaking, an Italian composer leaped to his feet and demanded that these remarks should be struck off the minutes, as they were insulting to a great nation. For the first time, a real vitality permeated the hall. Heated speeches were made by partisans of both sides, but the overwhelming majority supported Frankel in his denunciation. Your contributor ended the debate by giving his unconditional support to Frankel.

Unfortunately this was the only topic which really aroused the delegates' passions to any extent, and you must forgive me if I have devoted so much space to it. The general atmosphere of a congress such as this tends to become soporific as time passes. One after another the delegates read their papers, some of them with little variety of expression; there follows the inevitable translation into one or even two different languages, and it is hard to preserve throughout the same expression of unabated enthusiasm and interest however enthralled one may be by the film as an art. The relatively few moments when there was any real discussion or interchange of ideas were by far the most exciting and productive.

The Congress did not pass any resolutions or make any proclamations—that was not its purpose. But I think its

general feeling may perhaps be crystallised in the following few statements:

1. That the composer can add immensely to the quality of a film—or mar it! And that consequently he should be entrusted with a say in the film's creation *from the beginning*.
2. That economy of means is more likely to succeed in film-music than overlavish scoring.
3. That the composer must be prepared to sacrifice his own personality in order to achieve the maximum integration with the film; the task is a challenge to his skill as a composer.
4. That the use of music in the cinema is still in a rudimentary state as an "art-form".

These decisions may not seem particularly striking or valuable; but on them at least there was a remarkable degree of unanimity. Besides this, papers were read on a very wide range of aspects of cinematic music, and I am certain that individual composers must have benefited considerably from the interchange of ideas over endless cups of coffee.

LIST OF PAPERS READ AT THE CONGRESS

Musical Ethnology and Cinematography.	André Schaeffner
Music and the Film	Guido Pannain
Collaboration between Musician and Film-maker.	Roland Manuel
Audio-Visual synthesis	Nicola Castarelli
Music and the Microphone	Hermann Scherchen
Author's Copyright	Alessandro Cicognini
Realistic Music	Enzo Masetti
Realism and Lyricism	Yves Baudrier
Musical and cinematographic literature.	Hans Strobel
Musical Quotation	Hans Keller
Music in the Short Film	Luciano Emmer
Problems of music in the historical film.	Maurice Thiriet
American Film Music	Daniele Amphitheatrof
The Execution of Film Music	Fernando Previtali
The Value of Music in the Film	Carmine Gallone
The Composer and Film Music	Roman Vlad
Cinema Plus Music	Valentino Bucchi
Irony and Humour in Film Music	Antony Hopkins
Music and the Documentary Film	Max Vredenburg
and papers on the general matter of musical aesthetics and the cinema by Wilfred Mellers, Fred Goldbeck and Boris de Schloezer. These last two were particularly highly spoken of.	

Among films shown were:

Non v'e pace sotto gli ulvi
La Beauté du Diable } complete

and extracts from:

Du Guesclin,
Les Visiteurs du Soir,
Symphonie Pastorale,
Vice Versa,
Les Maudits,
La Bataille du Rail, etc., etc.

DE SANTIS AND ITALIAN NEO-REALISM

John Francis Lane



De Santis' latest film, "*Pasqua di Sangue*" ("*Blood Easter*").

THE GREAT SUCCESS of the Italian film *Riso Amaro* in Italy, where in three months it exceeded the three years' earnings of *Open City*, and also in Paris and London, would appear to have divided opinion on the reputation of its director, Giuseppe de Santis. Those who acclaimed in his first film *Caccia Tragica* (called *Pursuit* in England) an outstanding new contributor to the post-war Italian "school", were disappointed to find in his second film all the faults of the earlier but few of its virtues. On the other hand, the public especially in Italy, were delighted to see that one of the Rossellini school should make so many concessions to popular taste. For it should be realised that Italian cinema audiences, who would after all prefer to enjoy Italian pictures, are accustomed to a choice between the highbrow "neo-realism" of Rossellini and Visconti or a type of commercial banality which is 70 per cent. of Italian film production.

Speaking recently to a group of young cinéastes in Paris, de Santis, forced to defend himself against merciless criticism of his last film, confessed that he had made a box-office success rather than an artistic masterpiece. To understand how this came about is to understand the complicated position of the young film maker to-day who, emerging during the last decade into a generation which accepts the talking film as a regular institution, finds himself serving a medium which is without definition and still reluctant to accept the artist unless he is "box-office".

De Santis is thirty-three years old. He began his film career by training in the Roman film school and is, therefore, unique in that, outside of Russia, the film schools have not yet had time to establish their "graduates" in the esteem of the film world. De Santis wrote profusely for Italian film papers, helping to develop the "esthétique" of cinema which he had been taught at Centro Sperimentale. His first studio chance came with *Ossessione*, the Italian version of Cain's novel "The Postman Always Rings Twice", a film which has not yet been shown in France or England. De Santis considers the director of this film, Luchino Visconti, to be foremost among Italian film makers, because he refuses to be influenced by the demands of the American market. However, to judge from stills of *Ossessione*, the picture does not lack its share of sex-appeal.

The next film on which de Santis worked was *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* (*The Sun Will Rise Again*), directed by Aldo Vergano, with a scenario by Guido Aristarco and Carlo Lizzani, the latter to become de Santis' habitual script collaborator, for he believes that scenarist and director should work together throughout the writing of the screen play. This picture, which has the same atmosphere as the last part of *Paisa*, is set also in the North of Italy during the last months of the war. In its treatment of the conflict between land-owners and the peasants, *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* was to set the style for de Santis' subsequent independent production,



The cult of the leg in Italian neo-realism. Above, Massimo Girotti and Clara Calamai in Visconti's *Ossessione*, the true pioneer work of the new Italian school. The examples from de Santis—Vivi Gioi as the gangster's girl in *Caccia Tragica* (right), and Silvana Mangano in *Riso Amaro* (below) suggest a debasement of the tradition. The picture sequence shows the path from art to commerce.



Caccia Tragica. This film, of which a great deal has already been written since its recent showing in London, was a notable milestone in the progress of the "new" Italian cinema, in spite of its many shortcomings, notably in the story and montage construction.

This was de Santis' record in 1948, the year in which the Italian cinema first began to be more than just a "Rossellini affair" in all our eyes. A film school, followed by journalistic experience and then some years as an assistant and as scenarist, climaxed by a production highly acclaimed throughout the film world. Now he had to choose between making a film according to the demands of his producers or else to go ahead as his own taste demanded and risk losing his financial support. Orson Welles had the same choice when R-K-O first invited him into the studios. He chose to go his own way and before long was through with Hollywood, so that he is now obliged to roam Europe in search of a "home". De Santis chose the other way, hoping to compromise, and made a name for himself, but still has to come to France for the finance of his next production.

Someone no doubt will argue that in other artistic media it has never been necessary for a young artist so to prostitute himself, and that when he has done so, then his succeeding work has remained on a secondary level; although many have produced what Bernard Shaw, describing his own early work, called "pot-boilers" and not been ashamed of it. But, in any case, times and conditions change, and the medium to which the adventurous young writer or artist finds himself attracted to-day is too complex and too objective to be so easily manœuvred. We all know what happens to anyone who goes to Hollywood with good intentions and we didn't need Mr. Eliot in his "Cocktail Party" to rub it in.

Everyone who reads newspapers knows that the cinema is a "big money" affair and its economics are the daily concern of politicians as well as film producers. In Italy, the economics of the film industry are even more complicated than in England and there is not the Canadian or Spanish markets which the French industry can always fall back upon. It may well develop that Cine-Citta, Mussolini's Roman Hollywood, will reach the same stalemate as is now being experienced in British studios.

Taking all these disturbing factors into consideration, to say nothing of the significant absence of any accepted standards of values in film appreciation, then it is not surprising that the new generation of film directors is lost in a wilderness which comes near to the lost regions of Existentialism.

Whatever the confusion of his "esthétique" may be, de Santis is not hesitating to plan his next production, which will expound still further the theme of *Il Sole Sorge Ancora* and *Caccia Tragica*.

Some months ago, it may be remembered, newspapers were full of stories from the South of Italy, describing how the peasants had seized large areas of fertile land which were lying waste, serving only as hunting ground for the rich landowners and their friends, while the peasants starved for lack of soil on which to cultivate their crops. This writer remembers how, at the time, Paul Strand, the American documentary director, commented on the filmic potentialities of these reports. Obviously de Santis had an equally acute eye for recognising film material in the everyday scene, for his next film will be set in a small village in the "boot" of Italy, under just such circumstances. The central character of the film will be played by an "international star" and one

can hope, for the sake of de Santis, that it will not be Signora Mangano.

A concern for the social problems of one's country is what de Santis considers to be the fundamental principle of this so-called "neo-realism". The term, detested by himself and many others, has come to represent a number of films which are conspicuous for their "open air" realism, in technique as well as subject matter. De Sica has spoiled us for the *Open City* style by showing a technical virtuosity in harmony with a realistic locale. He had begun to develop his style long before the Rossellini film made its impact on the post-war cinema.

In *Riso Amaro* the social problem found its motive in de Santis' portrait of the Italian youth in the post-war world, completely dominated by what can only be called "the coca-cola civilisation". Anyone who has been to Italy in the last years will be familiar with the tendency. At night, even in the smallest of Italian towns, most of the young people will be seen at one of the TEN odd cinemas at their disposal, absorbing with almost fanatical fascination the symbols of a life so glamorously different from their own. It is the mood which has made the Sicilian bandit, Giuliano, as popular as Garibaldi, and brought the Bergman "scandal" into the limelight.

The characters of *Riso Amaro* were typical of this mood. The exaggerated exoticism of Mangano and her leading men was not considered very extraordinary by Italian audiences. In Paris and London it no doubt simply appealed to the senses, again as a reaction to what we have come to expect from the Italian cinema.

Where de Santis really failed, and he is the first to admit it, was in allowing his subject to become submerged by the superficial realism of the script and the acting, and his own melodramatic handling, rather than serve for satire or perhaps a straightforward condemnation of social conditions. Evidently, the Centro Sperimentale did not teach some of the basic rules of literary construction. *Riso Amaro* ended up by being an unfortunate compromise between the established conception of "neo-realism", which de Santis sincerely advocates (even if under a different name) and the commercial idea—in which characters such as the heroine of the rice-fields and her gangster boy friend represent a preconceived notion of the idyllic way of life for the younger generation.

That de Santis should go so far as to say, in defence of his generation, that Italy has no cultural civilisation to turn to, only reveals the urgency of the task before Italian filmmakers. He himself appears to have been defeated already by the very dangers that he is so determined to fight. It is to be hoped that British and French critics, in expressing their admiration for the Italian cinema, will realise, as obviously de Sica has done, that the subject matter needs more careful consideration. Because very little else really new is to be noticed in other contemporary national cinemas (the Cocteau influence in France perhaps excepted), there is no reason why the Italian film should be taken out of its context and overpraised, as the work of Rossellini in particular has been. One real creative genius alone has emerged so far—Vittorio de Sica. The others, of which de Santis, being so conscious of what must be done, is perhaps to the fore, must establish once and for all what they mean (or what we mean) by "neo-realism", and then how they are to use it, and the film in general, to make their country's great artistic tradition again take its place in European culture.



The Seventh Art



London was once the safest city in the world. It is not so to-day. Young hoodlums have turned it into a dangerous city. These youngsters, and many of them are girls, use anything from razors to knuckle-dusters, black jacks and a peculiarly vicious instrument contrived from a bicycle chain. They use these instruments to maim and rob for money, for liquor, clothes and dance halls. In London, crimes of violence by these kid-mobsters are going up by the hour and good people are too terrified to step out on the streets these days. That is London today after 35 years of sex and crime pictures from Hollywood. (*Filmindia*, Bombay.)



THREE CAME HOME

Claudette Colbert, Patric Knowles
Will Appeal especially to Ladies
(Advt. in *Manchester Guardian*)



Sex, sensation and sensuality cannot alone make a film. *Rapture* has much more than that. It is magnificently photographed in Italy—it could well rank with the best of the Italian films. Though the dialogue is entirely in English, a large part of the cast and technical staff are Italians—indeed only in such a country as passionate Italy could such a story be convincingly told, since the sex is not introduced promiscuously but as an integral, the integral, part of a story enchantingly written, directed with an unerring touch, resulting in a whole which is 'out of this world'. (Publicity handout.)



CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

84. Our enquiries have confirmed that celluloid in all its forms is highly inflammable . . . (Report of the Committee on Celluloid Storage.)



In the window of an Aldershot undertaker was a rough-cast wooden coffin. On one side a card read: "You can enjoy yourself this week at the Alexandra by seeing *The Body Said No*". Another card read: "Enjoy yourself, it's later than you think. Make for the Alexandra before it is too late".

It may interest readers to know how the *Stromboli* ice-cream sundae was evolved for service in the restaurant. Ice-cream was moulded to represent a volcano, a cherry placed on top, broken nuts placed at the base, and raspberry syrup poured over the whole.

Sidney Hobart, of the Trocette, Bermondsey, based most of his publicity for *Captain from Castile* on word-play on the final word in the title . . . The town sweep was persuaded to carry an art card on his barrow reading: "I look different after washing with Castile. You will look different after watching *Captain from Castile* . . . A chemist filled his windows with bars of soap under a large portrait of a smiling girl, in front of which was a notice: "The Knights who use Castile are clean, but the *Captain from Castile* is romantic: see him at the Trocette". There goes the soap-motif again . . . (*Kinematograph Weekly*.)



THEY WERE NOT DIVIDED

A Grand Treat for Ex-Forces Men
(Advt. in *Manchester Guardian*)



On a busy Saturday night, with a capacity audience and about fifty persons waiting for the show break, which will occur in five minutes, a member of the audience is taken sick and vomits while on the way up the centre aisle. What procedure would you follow?

One answer said that an usher should immediately clean it up; another that wood shavings or sawdust should be procured to cover up the mess; another that ushers should divert patrons from the spot and incoming patrons be held back until it has been cleaned. Most answers agreed, however, that the worst of the mess should be cleaned up immediately with as little notice as possible, and the spot washed thoroughly after the waiting patrons had been seated.

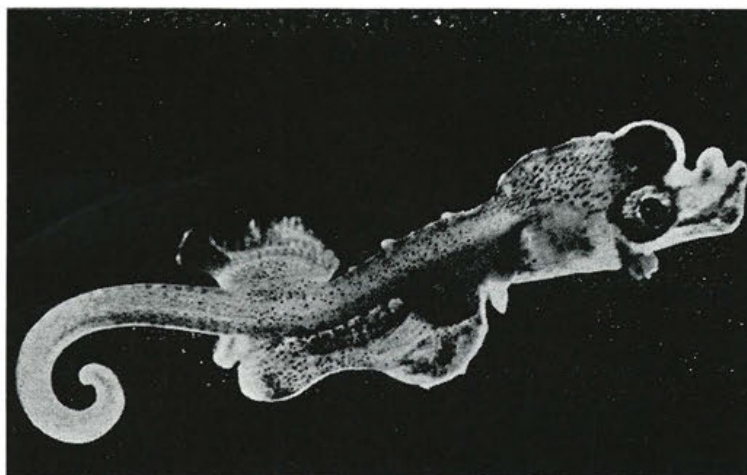
These doubtless should be judged sensible approaches to the problem, depending on the floor plan of the theatre (except that wood shavings or sawdust would hardly be available). The question specified a centre aisle without indicating whether it was a two-bank plan with or without wall aisles . . .

With people waiting for the show break, and as much as five minutes to spare, the best procedure doubtless would be to clean up the mess immediately and be prepared to follow at once with as much washing as time allows. Prompt action on the part of a couple of ushers might get rid of the soil entirely before the show break. If not, an usher should stand by the spot, directing outgoing patrons around it, while waiting patrons should be held until the soil has been completely removed during intermission. (Advice to showmen in *Motion Picture Herald*.)

THE WORLD OF JEAN PAINLEVÉ

John Maddison

A baby hippocampe.



L'Hippocampe.



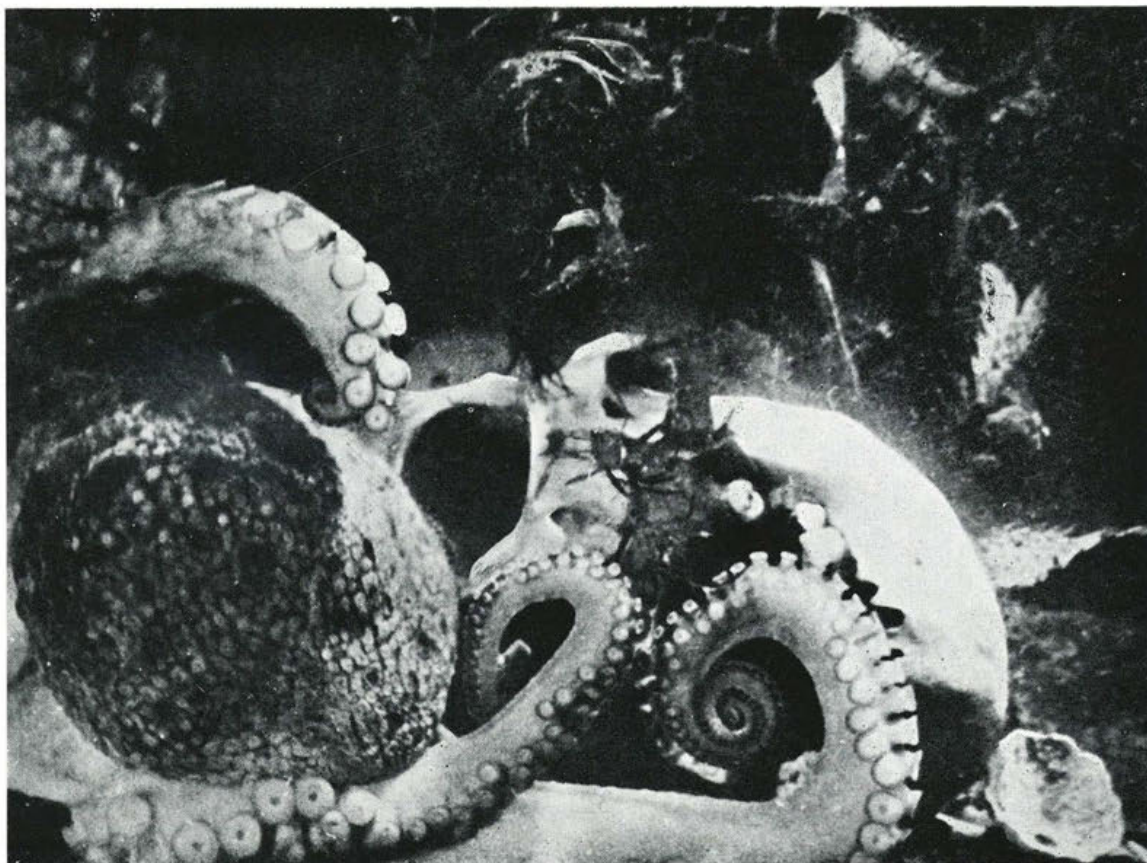
Spectacle—science—poetry. These, for Jean Painlevé, the French documentary film-maker, represent the three-fold possibility of the cinema. In giving a short account of his work, John Maddison also quotes from his own translation of Painlevé's prose writing.

PAINLEVÉ IS A RARE FIGURE even in the French cinema. For one thing, he is so many sided. Just over a quarter of a century ago, he presented his first paper to the French Academy of Sciences; he was then twenty-two and a promising research biologist. Two or three years later, he appears in a different role—that of a motor racing champion. About this time, too, in the 1920's, he was frequenting the little avant-garde theatres of Paris, playing small parts. A still photograph from a now forgotten silent film of the period shows him in the striped waistcoat of a French manservant. He is playing the piano while Michel Simon looks on benevolently. In 1928, he produced his first film—it dealt, of all things, with the life cycle of the stickleback. His interest in science—a passionate one—goes back to the closing years of the First World War. Surrounded by the intellectual amenities of life in a highly cultivated Parisian household, he was then a foppish young adolescent, the *coqueluche*, the pet, as he says, of his mother. A year or so before, his father, as Minister of War, had named Philippe Petain to succeed General Nivelle. The young Painlevé was not to know that in 1944, the same Philippe Petain, Marshal of France, would sign the order confiscating his *Solutions Françaises*, an

intensely patriotic film in which Paul Valéry speaks of the grace and strength of the French tradition. Ironically, France was by then well on its way towards liberation. When Paris and most of the country was free, Painlevé was made Director General of the French Film Industry. It was an act of homage—both to his work as a Resistance fighter, hunted by the Gestapo, and to the long series of his films interpreting science and natural history.

These films have reflected his belief in the power of the cinema to express and explore the visible universe.

For him, as for others, the cinema opens new windows. Registering at high speed, the camera reveals a world of movement slowed down to rhythms never before perceptible to human eyes. The gradual cycle of living cell formation, the growth of plants and the leisurely changes in the heavenly bodies, unfold on the screen. Viewpoints hitherto inaccessible bring new facts and forms, new dispositions of life and shade. To watch the phenomenon, to seize with the camera moments of strangeness and significance and to build from these moments, a story and a pattern—that has been Painlevé's special contribution to the cinema. His wit and sensibility have made it a unique one.



The octopus.

Music is an important element in his films and happily he has found musicians aware like himself of the singular excitements of the new medium. With one of them, Maurice Jaubert, he collaborated intimately for many years until Jaubert lost his life in the 1940 retreat across the Meuse. The music for his most characteristic film—*L'Hippocampe—The Sea Horse*—was written by Darius Milhaud. This heraldic-looking beast brings to Painlevé himself the same emotion, he imagines, as to another creature of the sea—the periophthalmus or mud-skipper. This emotion is *surprise*. He has written:

"Without eyelids, without covering folds, the round eyes of these fish express perpetual surprise. How justified is this look of surprise when they encounter the Hippocampi—the Sea-Horses—with their slow and formal movement, incapable of flight. But then flight would ill-become the dignity of these creatures.

"And what shall the other fish say of these vertical brethren, with their dignified sadness, imprint of ancient gargoyles? What manners they have, too! Not only the female who buries the nipple of her cloaca into the pocket carried by the male, but the male himself. He will fertilise the two hundred eggs she has passed to him, and keep them for weeks, accomplishing as it were the work of placentation, so that the blood of the father nourishes the unborn young. There follows for him a confinement of great suffering, of pained agitation.

"If only it were now all ended. . . . But there is still the damnable gassy secretion from the pocket, going on after the last of the offspring has been expelled. And sometimes

the lips of the orifice of the pocket coalesce, the pocket swells and, at last causes the male sea-horse to float upside-down in the water".

But the film *L'Hippocampe* ends on a note of gaiety and contrast. On the screen, behind the marine horses, graceful and deliberate, there appear in miniature the swift moving riders and horses of a human steeplechase.

In 1935, Painlevé together with Commander Le Prieur of the French Navy founded the *Club des Scaphandriers*—the Divers' Club. He and Le Prieur did much to develop underwater cinematography. The techniques evolved by members of the Club had important consequences during the Second World War. For some of his film work, Painlevé has used these diving techniques. More frequently, however, he has made his films in the controlled conditions of the aquarium. But whatever the method employed, it is perhaps in conveying the atmosphere of submarine landscapes and forms that his films have been most memorable. His imagination has been especially touched by the strange habits of the creature to be found there. In the note he has written on *Hyas*, he provides the setting for this film and for many others. He calls it—*La Promenade Au Jardin—The Walk In The Garden*.

"It is holiday. The sun plays on the water. The flowers have spread their petals. The tentacle of each anemone is touched with a tip of poison. Giant clams open beneath the gentle pressure of the waves, and close greedily upon anything that flows between their lips: pretty algæ, among others, so tempting that we must catch hold of them.

"All the colours mingle, brought by the sea-urchin and the starfish with their crystal tones of purple and blue against the

disc-like membranes of the jelly-fish.

"Who would have thought that these Medusæ, piled up at birth like plates one upon the other, would have become so pretty? The Siphonophora floating in their varied colonies, so disagreeable to the touch, innocently display a host of ramifications, burning sharply at the first contact. The sunlight playing on the water exerts a hypnotic charm.

"We fall to sleep in this garden oppressively calm.

"For the starfish, the dinner table is soon laid. He has merely to put out his stomach and engulf his prey. But the scallop, warned by the gradual approach of the starfish's thousand feet, takes to flight, clacking her valves. Everyone is alarmed at this charivari. The sun hides his face. It is raining in the garden".

Painlevé's acute awareness of pictorial values may be seen in the introduction he has written for his film, *Les Oursins—The Sea-Urchins*. He calls it *Promenade en Forêt*—a stroll in the Forest.

"The sea-urchin is a sweetmeat. The gourmet consumes everything, scraping the open shell with his bread; the fastidious diner picks on the sex glands—an iodised kernel. But most surprising is the sea-urchin's carapace. As our thoughts range idly over this crust, we see only an impenetrable forest. Then we notice that the spikes do not serve the creature for his locomotion. This is done by a system of hydraulic feet, extremely specialised. Over the many hundreds of holes in the carapace, there pass tiny flexible threads, ending in suckers. Beneath the carapace, all these hollow threads swell out into ampuls or bulbs, and these ampuls are themselves linked by channels filled with water. As they contract, they send water into the elastic threads. The threads stretch forward and the forest is in flower!

"If the suckers at the end of the tiny threads meet an obstacle they cling to it. Then the threads grow shorter again, forcing water back into the ampuls. And the sea-urchin is drawn towards its clinging suckers.

"But let us go deep down into the forest, enlarging its scale as we descend. All around the spikes, now transformed into doric columns, we come upon another, a smaller forest—a plantation of shrubs. These are the pedicellariæ, minute organs belonging to the sea-urchin, and formed of his substance, as are his spikes. Each is a chalky stem, ending in

three jaws, whose muscles open and close perpetually. Some pedicellariæ have long slender and perforated jaws. Others recall serpents' heads, powerful and jointed. And yet others, those for the sea-urchin's toilette, are shaped like clover leaves. They clean the surface of the animal and the grooves in his spikes. And last of all, there are other pedicellariæ, with poison glands, and teeth which inject poison, bevelled like hypodermic needles. Over the whole of the sea-urchin there stretches a carpet of vibratile cilia. Except, that is, at the very ends of his spikes—might this be due to wear and tear?"

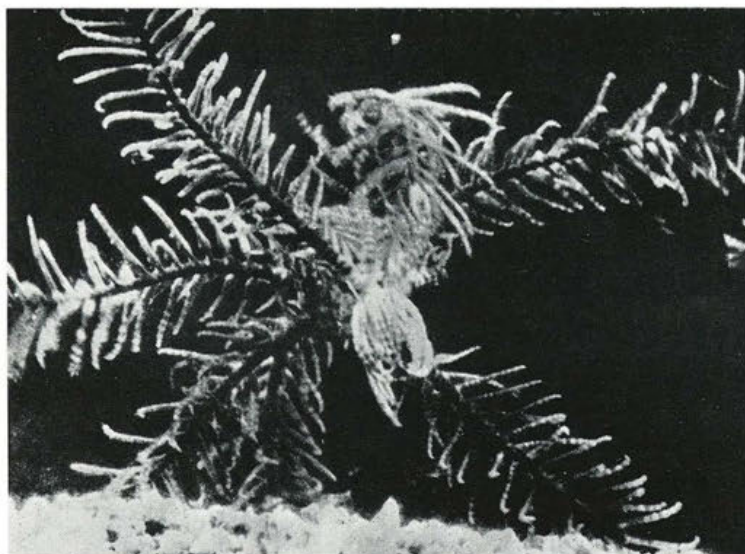
Painlevé sees in the shapes and behaviour of the creatures he is observing, his own especial analogies and associations. Beneath the microscope, the tail of the common shrimp reveals a series of configurations recalling ancient graffiti, and the cyclops head of *Daphnia*, the water flea, is a tribal mask. Of the microscopic death struggles taking place in pond water he says: "In all these assassinations one is overwhelmed by the supplicating gestures of the victims. The imagination hears their cries". In such films, as *Le Vampyr—The Vampire*—legend touches reality, and the terrors of human fantasy are set beside the terrors of creation. But though fancy may roam anthropomorphically, the observation is usually first-hand and precise.

Characteristically, and a little melodramatically, it must be confessed, he imagines, in discussing his film *La Pieuvre (The Octopus)* that this legendary creature is a siren "Madame des Entreintes"—The Lady who Embraces Tightly.

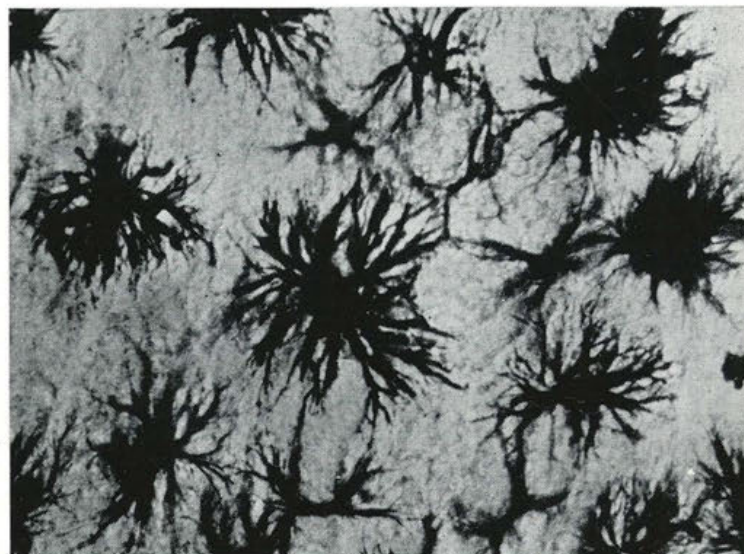
"Draped in her skin with its changing colours, the lady has closed her eyes. . . . Between her heavy lids, sensual and aware, there filters nevertheless a wisp of vision, perpetually alert. . . . For this vulgar mollusc possesses eyelids and can measure her vision, unlike fish with the permanent astonishment of their round wide-open eyes.

"Better still; the structure of the eye of the octopus reveals the sensitive cells, the cones and fibres, found in the eyes of those superior creatures, the vertebrates. She sees far, she aims well and pfffuitt!!! Eight prehensile ropes are hurled as if by the most skilled, the most astute of cowboys.

"How can one resist these interlacings endlessly renewed? Each sucker, and there are hundreds of them, plays its part unfailingly, even if the tentacle be severed. Bound by these cords, his breath crushed from his body, the crab receives a



A starfish



Magnified detail: a shrimp's tail.

mortal kiss from the mouth of the octopus, who with her terrible parrot beak, crumbles the hardest of carapaces.

"Meanwhile, undisturbed, the machinery of her breathing functions. Water is drawn in by the gills and is then thrust out by a central tube, the siphon, pointing forwards. In order to swim, the octopus has only to contract this siphon powerfully. Then she is jet-propelled, but backwards, and in this manner, she may enter the mouth of a conger, beatifically open at an angle of one hundred and twenty degrees. . . . A morsel indeed! . . . for the octopus is malleable. . . . Her tentacles, the last to enter, hang like moustaches from the jaw of the conger. And, of course, these tentacles, suitably beaten up, are delicious with a dressing of sauce à l'Américaine.

"The moods of the octopus are seen in the changing tints of her emotions. She turns red and black and violet and yellow as each zone of her pigments contract. And experiment shows that she remembers, recognises, adapts herself to society. She will have nothing to do with foul smelling eggs which she rejects violently, growing white with anger".

Although this marine world is his main hunting ground as a film-maker, Painlevé has made many other experiments in the cinema during the past 20 years. In his basement workshop—a sort of 18th century dungeon at the Conservatoire des Arts et Metiers in Paris—one comes upon the evidence of these experiments: the three-dimensional screen—work on it was stopped by the war—and the high speed camera, with which the first time I met him he was attempting to catch a bullet on the wing. He is enamoured of all kinds of optical and other devices, and in 1948 he came to London to achieve, with the help of British colleagues, the linking up for the first time publicly of the microscope with the television cameras at Alexandra Palace.

Science has not been his only interest; in 1936, he began to make *Barbe Bleue* (Blue Beard) a new sort of puppet film entertainment for which Maurice Jaubert wrote the music, and René Bertrand, the sculptor, carved in wood some hundreds of coloured dolls. Recently he has been using the film camera to illustrate a new method of notation for recording the steps on the ballet and other movements of the

body. Painlevé has experimented also in interpreting the modern version of the creation story, the story of evolution—he devised the evolutionary spiral for the 1937 Paris Exhibition, a great pictorial display composed of the figures of a thousand animals and plants. In all these attempts at popular education, besides the desire to convey facts, there is also the desire to evoke a mood—to interpret and to create. Writing of his film *Le Voyage Au Ciel*—which is, in effect, a journey through the telescope—he imagines the observer stretched out on the newly mown hay on a starry evening in summer, patiently waiting and gazing upwards, until the moment of escape is achieved.

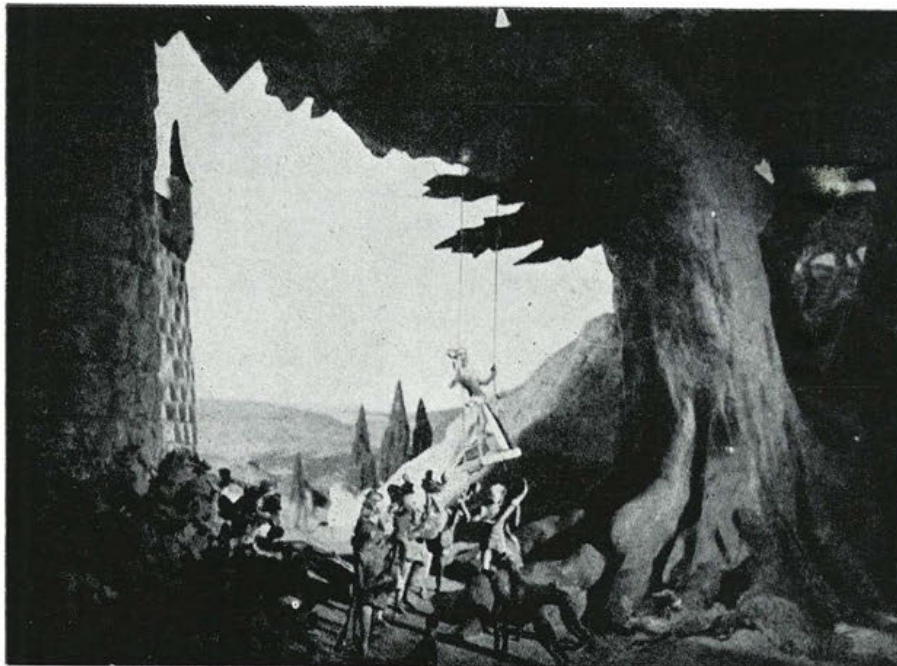
"Soon a torpor sets you free, the vault of heaven shapes the body to its long curve. Gravity ceases to pull. You are drawn into the boundlessness. The journey begins while the homely crickets play their music of the spheres, rustily turning.

"All now is made simple and explicit; this that was fullness is now void, that that was void is now full. The imponderable ether is a tablet of marble, immediately responsive. Matter is emptiness, a hole.

"But on returning from this adventure, you feel that you have been dreaming. So it is that there are few who will bear witness with you to this same experiment. And yet, as your telescope is directed towards it, you know that the lenses are a threshold over which you may step and set foot on the moon. This is the journey into the sky".

In the fifty years or so of its history, the cinema has been a hurly-burly, with loud and often ribald values. In it, the poet has been a rare figure. Yet it is on this ground that we must go to meet Painlevé.

"Soon" he wrote in 1946 "the cinema will die. Its children will use an electro-magnetic wire instead of celluloid. Their images will appear on the lenticular screens of television in colour. Cathode tubes will replace light sources. Their lenses will be the fields of force. In a word, they will be handsome children. But let us hope that they will not abandon that synthesis of art, science and of poetry which is the true cinema".



Painlevé's puppet film, "Bluebeard".

THE LADY VANISHES

Brian Desmond Hurst

A British film director contributes some personal comments on a national problem. About a year ago Brian Desmond Hurst decided to become an independent director/producer, and here he describes the present situation in the British film industry as he finds it affects an independent.

"Break bitter furies of complexity,
Those images that yet
Fresh images beget
That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea."

Byzantium, W. B. Yeats.



An Edwardian music-hall number from Brian Desmond Hurst's "Trottie True". Jean Kent, Bill Rowbotham.

"I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly; you make me quite giddy".

"All right", said the British film industry; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.

"Well! I've often seen a film industry without a grin," thought Alice, "but a grin without a film industry! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in all my life".

Now I begin to wonder whether even the grin is left. We are no longer astonished when we look in the paper to see what's on at the local or enquire what companies are at present in the studios and find little that is British. Three of our friends drove the last tragic nails into the industry's coffin—*Christopher Columbus*, *Bonnie Prince Charlie* and the very *Bad Lord Byron*. They could hardly have performed a more successfully murderous task had they been conceived with the sole purpose of killing British films.

There had been attempts to save the industry. Until recently Gainsborough Studios were given a free hand to make moderately priced pictures and prove that in this type of film Britain was invincible. But once again the general in charge of the campaign was not good enough, and the theory that box-office receipts would make up for lack of quality in the pictures broke down, when it dawned on financiers that bad pictures play to empty houses whatever their original cost. Richard Winnington, one of our ablest film critics, cries for "a producer with fire in his belly". True enough; but we need

fire in the bellies of a dozen producers to rekindle the vital spark in our film industry.

There have been attempts by the independent companies—but what a mad hatter's tea party these independent companies have had to go through before their films could actually reach the studio floor. It might be interesting here to recapitulate the antics that have to be performed in order to raise enough money to finance a film today.

First, with a script (no doubt a speculative venture only on the writer's part), a cast list and a budget, a call is made on one of the major distributing circuits. These companies have their own interests and their own programmes, so there is little time or interest for the independent. However, assuming that some interest is actually aroused, the possibility of a guaranteed distribution involves a great number of considerations. For instance, there are almost certainly one or two stars already under contract to the company, whom it would be much wiser to use than those whose names are on the original cast list. The fact that these players may be quite inappropriate is of no great importance, for the distributing company has also the rights of a story which it thinks you ought to use in preference to the one on which you have been working. And, of course, it has a director under contract whose services it would be foolish to waste. This is the moment when you start thinking unprintable things about the company and decide to try one of the independent distributors. There are still two excellent companies of this type—Independent and Renown—but, alas, their hands are usually



full with their own projects: there is nothing but to return to the original distributor, and somehow wheedle him into an agreement.

The next port of call is the bank, where you try to turn the guarantee into pounds, shillings and pence: perhaps you succeed in raising some two-thirds of the money you need. This leaves the problem of trying to find the "end money", or the "risk money" as it is sometimes more appropriately called. However good your proposition may be, the fact remains that the bank and the distributors will have first call on the takings from your film, the Film Finance Corporation (for part of your finance will almost certainly have come from there) comes next, and a generous friend who might be prepared to lend the "risk money" can only be repaid last of all.

Meanwhile, not a day passes but letters come begging for work, and the telephone rings: "I hear you are making a picture—is there anything for me?" . . .

Recently, I was planning a film version of *She Stoops to Conquer*. More ingenuous then than now, I proceeded to plan in continual consultation with the distributor's office. Advice was plentiful; after a while I found that the robust 18th century comedy had become a sniggering, early 20th century French farce. My star was being continually chased in and out of bedrooms, and I even found that I had agreed that a sequence should end with her being caught and thrown on to an old Jacobean bedstead. . . . The budget was for £140,000; the picture was to be made in Technicolor. Directors and artists (who included Jean Kent, James Donald, Cecil Parker) had agreed to leave the larger parts of their salaries in the picture, amounting in all to some £15,000—third risk, remember. We even agreed to introduce three songs, but it was all to no purpose, romps, rumps and rapes notwithstanding. Important distributors still said it was too risky a proposition. They were influenced, they explained, by the fact that the play was "a bit of a classic", and *Hamlet*, of course, had been no box-office in Britain.

The irony of the whole situation in the film world at present is that it need never have happened. Indeed, when circumstances beyond our control had presented us with the greatest crisis of our time, it *did not* happen. The grimmest years of the war turned out to be also the years of *49th Parallel*, *Next of Kin*, *In Which We Serve*, *Dangerous Moonlight*, *The Way Ahead*, *Western Approaches* and *The Way To The Stars*. But as I write now, only one of the country's important directors is working: Anthony Asquith, after two years, is making a film. Our best director, Carol Reed, is not filming; nor is David Lean, nor Thorold Dickinson. I myself have not made a picture for over a year. The plight of many technicians, whose salaries never ran to post-impressionists or country houses, is of course far more serious.

In one direction there is still hope, for we have seen on the horizon a cloud no bigger than Sir Michael Balcon's hand, and we have been cheered, at least temporarily, by *Whisky Galore* and comforted by *Kind Hearts and Coronets*. There has also been, thanks to Earl St. John and Jay Lewis, *Morning Departure*. There is still the memory of a courageous and desperate attempt by J. Arthur Rank and John Davis to open a real market for British films in America and their plan to lay the foundations of real film craftsmanship by creating a school

Films by Brian Desmond Hurst. 1934, "The Tell-Tale Heart". 1940, Diana Wynyard and Ralph Richardson in F. L. Green's "On the Night of the Fire". 1946, the Arnhem film, "Theirs is the Glory".

for the training of young directors, stars and technicians. Personally I shall always maintain my gratitude to them for making it possible for me to make *Theirs Is The Glory*, though it is fashionable now for mud to be thrown indiscriminately at the Rank Organisation.

At the moment, the American bridgehead is well established: frozen sterling enables the Americans to bring their own producers, directors and players over here, to cast an American star (even though it is the charming Irene Dunne) to play Queen Victoria, and another typically American actress to play the typically English aristocrat who falls in love with a Peckish Hornblower. I do not blame the Americans—they are business men—but I do blame our own producers.

There is a loud cry in some quarters for relief from entertainment tax. This, it is claimed, would save the industry. But surely, the only result of this would be to give back the power once more to those who have already brought the industry to its present crisis. (And I still long for the powers of a pasha so that I might clap my hands and order several of those infidels who still sit in comfortable seats to be sewn up in leathern sacks, weighted with the reels of their own bad films, and flung into the sewers beneath Wardour Street.) Without appearing to be over fond of this system of taxation, I must point elsewhere for a remedy.

The film industry has a good friend in Harold Wilson, and a friend who has let it be understood that he will consider any reasonable project for the industry's welfare. The Gater Working Party, on which surprisingly no film directors served or were even represented, met some ten times during 1949. The President of the Board of Trade also set up the Plant Committee of Enquiry "to consider the arrangements at present in operation for the distribution of films to exhibitors and their exhibition to the public". Finally, £5,000,000 of public money was made available to the film industry, even if £3,000,000 was inexplicably routed in one direction. I hope this touching faith in this group will result in the return of some of these millions, so that other less fortunate (but still trying) independent producers may get a taste of the money. All this

was done with the object of preventing the unemployment which now exists in British films. None of the moves succeeded, though certainly the Corporation has been able to ensure a number of practicable budgets.

There is, however, a project which Mr. Wilson might well consider, in adapted form, for the revivification of the industry. That is the film now being made with Corporation backing by the Association of Cinematograph and Allied Technicians. Excellent project though it is, one film which will not be seen for a least a year is not enough. There should be a dozen such pictures in the studios. Much might be achieved if Mr. Wilson were to convene an advisory panel consisting not of financiers but of the men whose livelihood and experiences are in the actual making of films, whose patent intentions are to make good and better ones. I have no doubt that all our leading directors would be pleased to give the industry the benefit of their experience and their taste on such a committee. Two leading screenwriters—alas, I cannot think of any names offhand—and perhaps two laymen to keep us from becoming too introspective, would produce a body which could advise the Board of Trade where public money could best be placed—not on the offchance of hitting a jackpot, but on the certainty of rebuilding our tradition of worthwhile pictures: and, through this, establishing a sound and solid industry in which certain people would no longer be able to gamble with the livelihoods of their employees.

It cannot be over-emphasised how important it is that we have a permanent, flourishing industry which still expresses our way of life and way of thought. It is essential not only to us, but to others who look to us as a bastion of our western civilisation. We must not permit in our studios films with that completely materialist point of view which we have come to associate with the average Hollywood product. There is a certain national quality of selflessness in our make-up which can be called Christianity, or socialism, or sportsmanship, according to creed: we are, no doubt, a little timid at defining or analysing it. But it is part of everything we do: it is part of every good film we make and, what is more, it is box-office.

(Interview with Cocteau continued from page 231)

forbidden to look at his wife were meant to be comical. I believed that a touch of humour was required to brighten up the rather sombre atmosphere. But in Cannes, when the film was shown for the first time, something very funny happened. The outbursts of laughter provoked by these scenes met with furious opposition of 'pst' coming from the 'Cocteau-ists' who thought I would consider that laughter as a profanation".

While Cocteau had been busy with *Orphée* he gave his script of *Les Enfants Terribles* to his friend Jean-Pierre Melville who was to direct it. After having seen the finished film I felt some doubts whether it was a faithful screen-translation of a notable literary work, whether in fact such a translation was possible at all in this case.

The sound of the poet's voice when he contradicted me made me feel that I should have kept my doubts to myself. He anyhow declared emphatically:

"Jean-Pierre's work corresponds so closely to my own ideas that now I cannot imagine the protagonists of my book otherwise than with the features of Nicole Stéphane and Edouard Dermithe. Were I to write this book now—I would be influenced by the characters they have created, which is all the more strange as they weren't even born when I first conceived *Les Enfants Terribles*".

Jean Cocteau has no further film projects for the moment. "I feel terribly tired", he says, "and I'll probably turn to writing again. Anyhow, I never make plans for what I am going to do. Whilst so many people talk about *évasion* nowadays, I always await an *invasion*. Only when an idea invades my mind and takes possession of me entirely, do I begin to look around for appropriate means of expression".

What he resents most is the commercialisation of the cinema and the dependence of the film-maker on financial backers. The production of *Les Enfants Terribles* cost 20 million francs (i.e., £20,000—sic!), that of *Orphée*, 60 million.

"The most urgent need of the cinema is at present young men with vivid imagination and dynamic personality", he affirms, "and they have no chance in view of the present financial risks. The cinema as an art can only survive if films can be made cheaply. I am therefore experimenting with a 16-mm. camera, and it is quite possible that one of these days I shall start making a film in my own back garden. It isn't really the technical perfection that counts. What we need is not technique but invention . . ."

As I leave Cocteau's house with the sound of his enthusiastic voice still in my ears, a strange association of ideas brings to my mind a long forgotten image. It is the opening shot of his first film *Le Sang d'Un Poète*: the knob of a door that someone is trying to open . . .

DICKENS, GRIFFITH AND THE FILM TO-DAY (3)

S. M. Eisenstein

Eisenstein's last book, "Film Form," a collection of his miscellaneous writing over the last fifteen years, was published in America nearly two years ago. We are pleased to announce that Dennis Dobson Ltd. have acquired the rights for this country, and will publish the book at a later date. Meanwhile, SIGHT & SOUND is serialising parts of it each month: in this issue we continue an important essay on Dickens and Griffith. The translation is by Jay Leyda.

ANALOGIES AND RESEMBLANCES cannot be pursued too far—they lose conviction and charm. They begin to take on the air of machination or card-tricks. I should be very sorry to lose the conviction of the affinity between Dickens and Griffith, allowing this abundance of common traits to slide into a game of anecdotal semblance of tokens.

All the more that such a gleaning from Dickens goes beyond the limits of interest in Griffith's individual cinematic craftsmanship and widens into a concern with film-craftsmanship in general. This is why I dig more and more deeply into the film-indications of Dickens, revealing them through Griffith—for the use of future film-exponents. So I must be excused, in leafing through Dickens, for having found in him even—a "dissolve". How else could this passage be defined—the opening of the last chapter of *A Tale of Two Cities*:

Along the Paris streets, the death-carts rumble, hollow and harsh. Six tumbrils carry the day's wine to La Guillotine . . .

Six tumbrils roll along the streets. Change these back again to what they were, thou powerful enchanter, Time, and they shall be seen to be the carriages of absolute monarchs, the equipages of feudal nobles, the toilettes of flaring Jezebels, the churches that are not my Father's house but dens of thieves, the huts of millions of starving peasants!

How many such "cinematic" surprises must be hiding in Dickens' pages!

However, let us turn to the basic montage structure, whose rudiment in Dickens' work was developed into the elements of film composition in Griffith's work. Lifting a corner of the veil over these riches, these hitherto unused experiences, let us look into *Oliver Twist*. Open it at the twenty-first chapter. Let's read its beginning:

Chapter XXI*

1. It was a cheerless morning when they got into the street; blowing and raining hard; and the clouds looking dull and stormy.

The night had been very wet; for large pools of water had collected in the road: and the kennels were overflowing.

There was a faint glimmering of the coming day in the sky; but it rather aggravated than relieved the gloom of the scene: the sombre light only serving to pale that which the street lamps afforded, without shedding any warmer or brighter tints upon the wet housetops, and dreary streets.

There appeared to be nobody stirring in that quarter of the town; for the windows of the houses were all closely shut; and the streets through which they passed, were noiseless and empty.

2. By the time they had turned into the Bethnal Green Road, the day had fairly begun to break. Many of the lamps were already extinguished;

a few country wagons were slowly toiling on, towards London.

* For demonstration purposes I have broken the beginning of this chapter into smaller pieces than did its author; the numbering is, of course, also mine.

and now and then, a stage-coach, covered with mud, rattled briskly by:

the driver bestowing, as he passed, an admonitory lash upon the heavy wagoner who, by keeping on the wrong side of the road had endangered his arriving at the office, a quarter of a minute after his time.

The public-houses, with gas-lights burning inside, were already open.

By degrees, other shops began to be unclosed; and a few scattered people were met with.

Then, came straggling groups of labourers going to their work; then, men and women with fish-baskets on their heads:

donkey-carts laden with vegetables;
chaise-carts filled with live-stock or whole carcasses of meat;
milk-women with pails;
and an unbroken concourse of people, trudging out with various supplies to the eastern suburbs of the town.

3. As they approached the City, the noise and traffic gradually increased;

and when they threaded the streets between Shoreditch and Smithfield, it had swelled into a roar of sound and bustle.

It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again; and the busy morning of half the London population had begun . . .

4. It was market-morning.

The ground was covered, nearly ankle deep, with filth and mire; and a thick steam, perpetually rising from the reeking bodies of the cattle,

and mingling with the fog,
which seemed to rest upon the chimney-tops, hung heavily above . . .

Countrymen,
butchers,
drovers,
hawkers,
boys,
thieves,
idlers,
and vagabonds of every low grade,
were mingled together in a dense mass;
5. the whistling of drovers,
the barking of dogs,
the bellowing and plunging of oxen,
the bleating of sheep,
the grunting and squeaking of pigs;
the cries of hawkers,
the shouts, oaths and quarrelling on all sides;
the ringing of bells
and roar of voices, that issued from every public-house;
the crowding, pushing, driving, beating,
whooping and yelling;
the hideous and discordant din that resounded from every corner of the market;

and the unwashed, unshaven, squalid, and dirty figures constantly running to and fro, and bursting in and out of the throng; rendered it a stunning and bewildering scene, which quite confounded the senses.

How often have we encountered just such a structure in the work of Griffith? This austere accumulation and quickening tempo, this gradual play of light: from burning street-lamps, to their being extinguished; from night, to dawn; from dawn,



Brownlow and Grimwig.



Fagin, Sikes and Nancy in the public-house.



Oliver recaptured.



Mrs. Bedwin distressed.

to the full radiance of day (*It was as light as it was likely to be, till night came on again*); this calculated transition from purely visual elements to an interweaving of them with aural elements: at first as an indefinite rumble, coming from afar at the second stage of increasing light, so that the rumble may grow into a roar, transferring us to a purely aural structure, now concrete and objective (section 5 of our break-down): with such scenes, picked up *en passant*, and intercut into the whole—like the driver, hastening towards his office; and, finally, these magnificently typical details, the reeking bodies of the cattle, from which the steam rises and mingles with the over-all cloud of morning fog, or the close-up of the legs in the almost ankle-deep filth and mire, all this gives the fullest cinematic sensation of the panorama of a market.

Surprised by these examples from Dickens, we must not forget one more circumstance, related to the creative work of Dickens in general.

Thinking of this as taking place in "cozy" old England, we are liable to forget that the works of Dickens, considered not only against a background of English literature, but against a background of world literature of that epoch, as well, were produced as the works of a city artist. He was the first to bring factories, machines and railways into literature.

But indication of this "urbanism" in Dickens may be found not only in his thematic material, but also in that head-spinning tempo of changing impressions with which Dickens sketches the city in the form of a dynamic (montage) picture; and here is another, directly opposite aspect of a city, out-distancing Hollywood's picture of the City by eighty years.

It contained several large streets all very like one another, inhabited by people equally like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.

Is this Dickens' Coketown of 1853, or King Vidor's *The Crowd* of 1928?

If in the above-cited examples we have encountered prototypes of characteristics for Griffith's *montage exposition*, then it would pay us to read further in *Oliver Twist*, where we can find another montage method typical for Griffith—the method of a *montage progression of parallel scenes, intercut into each other*.

For this let us turn to that group of scenes in which is set forth the familiar episode of how Mr. Brownlow, to show faith in Oliver in spite of his pick-pocket reputation, sends him to return books to the book-seller, and of how Oliver again falls into the clutches of the thief Sikes, his sweetheart Nancy, and old Fagin.

These scenes are unrolled absolutely à la Griffith: both in their inner emotional line, as well as in the unusual sculptural relief and delineation of the characters; in the uncommon full-bloodedness of the dramatic as well as the humorous traits in them; finally, also in the typical Griffithesque montage of parallel interlocking of all the links of the separate episodes. Let us give particular attention to this last peculiarity, just as unexpected, one would think, in Dickens, as it is characteristic for Griffith!

Chapter XIV

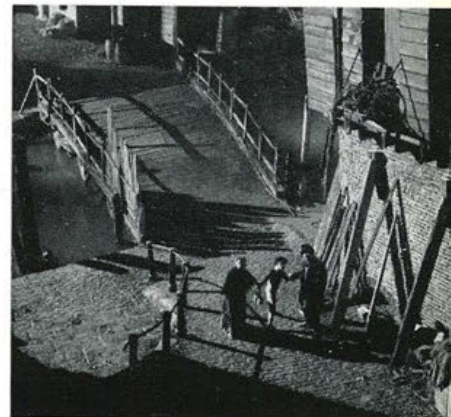
Comprising further particulars of Oliver's stay at Mr. Brownlow's, with the remarkable prediction which one Mr. Grimwig uttered concerning him, when he went out on an errand.

... "Dear me, I am very sorry for that", exclaimed Mr. Brownlow; "I particularly wished those books to be returned tonight".

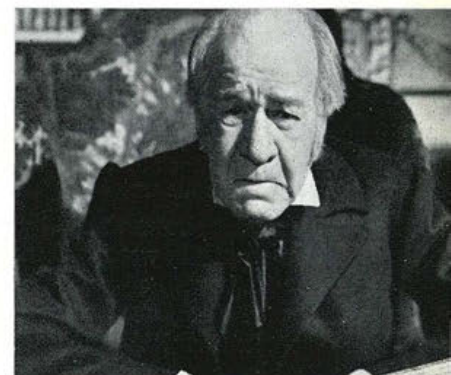
Parallel montage.



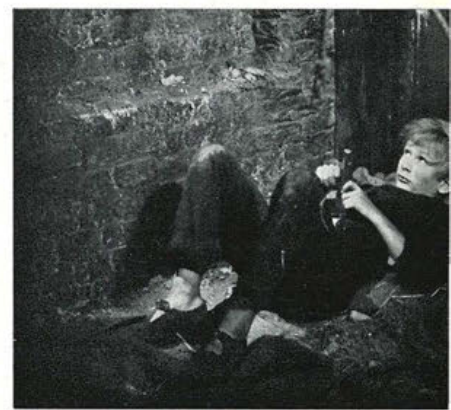
"I fear it is all too true . . .".



Oliver dragged back to Fagin.



"Never let me hear the boy's name again".



Oliver imprisoned.

"Send Oliver with them", said Mr. Grimwig, with an ironical smile; "he will be sure to deliver them safely, you know".

"Yes; do let me take them, if you please, Sir", said Oliver. "I'll run all the way, Sir".

The old gentleman was just going to say that Oliver should not go out on any account; when a most malicious cough from Mr. Grimwig determined him that he should; and that, by his prompt discharge of the commission, he should prove to him the injustice of his suspicions; on this head at least; at once.

(Oliver is prepared for the errand to the bookstall-keeper.)

"I won't be ten minutes, Sir", replied Oliver, eagerly.

(Mrs. Bedwin, Mr. Brownlow's housekeeper, gives Oliver the directions, and sends him off.)

"Bless his sweet face!" said the old lady, looking after him. "I can't bear, somehow, to let him go out of my sight".

At this moment, Oliver looked gaily round, and nodded before he turned the corner. The old lady smilingly returned his salutation, and, closing the door, went back to her own room.

"Let me see; he'll be back in twenty minutes, at the longest", said Mr. Brownlow, pulling out his watch, and placing it on the table. "It will be dark by that time".

"Oh! you really expect him to come back, do you?" inquired Mr. Grimwig.

"Don't you?" asked Mr. Brownlow, smiling.

The spirit of contradiction was strong in Mr. Grimwig's breast, at the moment; and it was rendered stronger by his friend's confident smile.

"No", he said, smiting the table with his fist, "I do not. The boy has a new suit of clothes on his back; a set of valuable books under his arm; and a five-pound note in his pocket. He'll join his old friends the thieves, and laugh at you. If ever that boy returns to this house, Sir, I'll eat my head".

With these words he drew his chair closer to the table; and there the two friends sat, in silent expectation, with the watch between them.

This is followed by a short "interruption" in the form of a digression:

It is worthy of remark as illustrating the importance we attach to our own judgments, and the pride with which we put forth our rash and hasty conclusions, that, although Mr. Grimwig was not by any means a bad-hearted man, and though he would have been unfeignedly sorry to see his respected friend duped and deceived, he really did most earnestly and strongly hope, at that moment, that Oliver Twist might not come back.

And again a return to the two old gentlemen:

It grew so dark, that the figures on the dial-plate were scarcely discernible; but there the two old gentlemen continued to sit, in silence: with the watch between them.

Twilight shows that only a little time has passed, but the *close-up* of the watch, *already twice* shown lying between the old gentlemen, says that a great deal of time has passed already. But just then, as in the game of "will he come? won't he come?" involving not only the two old men, but also the kind-hearted reader, the worst fears and vague forebodings of the old housekeeper are justified by the cut to the new scene—Chapter XV. This begins with a short scene in the public-house, with the bandit Sikes and his dog, old Fagin and Miss Nancy, who has been obliged to discover the whereabouts of Oliver.

"You are on the scent, are you, Nancy?" inquired Sikes, proffering the glass.

"Yes, I am, Bill", replied the young lady, disposing of its contents; "and tired enough of it I am, too . . ."

Then, one of the best scenes in the whole novel—at least one that since childhood has been perfectly preserved, along with the evil figure of Fagin—the scene in which Oliver, marching along with the books, is suddenly startled by a young woman screaming out very loud, "Oh, my dear brother!" And he had hardly looked up, to see what the matter was, when he was stopped by having a pair of arms thrown tight round his neck.

With this cunning manœuvre Nancy, with the sympathies of the whole street, takes the desperately pulling Oliver, as her

"prodigal brother", back into the bosom of Fagin's gang of thieves. This fifteenth chapter closes on the now familiar montage phrase:

The gas-lamps were lighted; Mrs. Bedwin was waiting anxiously at the open door; the servant had run up the street twenty times to see if there were any traces of Oliver; and still the two old gentlemen sat, perseveringly, in the dark parlour: with the watch between them.

In Chapter XVI Oliver, once again in the clutches of the gang, is subjected to mockery. Nancy rescues him from a beating:

"I won't stand by and see it done, Fagin", cried the girl. "You've got the boy, and what more would you have? Let him be—let him be, or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time".

By the way, it is characteristic for both Dickens and Griffith to have these sudden flashes of goodness in "morally degraded" characters and, though these sentimental images verge on hokum, they are so faultlessly done that they work on the most sceptical readers and spectators!

At the end of this chapter, Oliver, sick and weary, falls "sound asleep". Here the physical time unity is interrupted—an evening and night, crowded with events; but the montage unity of the episode is not interrupted, tying Oliver to Mr. Brownlow on one side, and to Fagin's gang on the other.

Following, in Chapter XVIII, is the arrival of the parish beadle, Mr. Bumble, in response to an inquiry about the lost boy and the appearance of Bumble at Mr. Brownlow's, again in Mr. Grimwig's company. The content and reason for their conversation is revealed by the very title of the chapter: **Oliver's destiny continuing unpropitious brings a great man to London to injure his reputation . . .**

"I fear it is all too true", said the old gentleman sorrowfully, after looking over the papers. "This is not much for your intelligence; but I would gladly have given you treble the money, if it had been favourable to the boy".

It is not at all improbable that if Mr. Bumble had been possessed of this information at an earlier period of the interview, he might have imparted a very different colouring to his little history. It was too late to do it now, however: so he shook his head gravely; and, pocketing the five guineas, withdrew . . .

"Mrs. Bedwin", said Mr. Brownlow, when the housekeeper appeared; "that boy, Oliver, is an impostor".

"It can't be, Sir. It cannot be", said the old lady energetically. . . . "I never will believe it, Sir . . . Never!"

"You old women never believe anything but quack-doctors, and lying story-books", growled Mr. Grimwig. "I knew it all along . . ."

"He was a dear, grateful, gentle child, Sir", retorted Mrs. Bedwin, indignantly. "I know what children are, Sir; and have done these forty years; and people who can't say the same, shouldn't say anything about them. That's my opinion!"

This was a hard hit at Mr. Grimwig, who was a bachelor. As it extorted nothing from that gentleman but a smile, the old lady tossed her head, and smoothed down her apron preparatory to another speech, when she was stopped by Mr. Brownlow.

"Silence!" said the old gentleman, feigning an anger he was far from feeling. "Never let me hear the boy's name again. I rang to tell you that. Never. Never, on any pretence, mind! You may leave the room, Mrs. Bedwin. Remember! I am in earnest".

And the entire intricate montage complex of this episode is concluded with the sentence:

There were sad hearts in Mr. Brownlow's that night.

It was not by accident that I have allowed myself such full extracts, in regard not only to the composition of the scenes, but also to the delineation of the characters, for in their very modelling, in their characteristics, in their behaviour, there is much typical of Griffith's manner. This equally concerns also his "Dickens-esque" distressed, defenseless creatures (recalling Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess in *Broken Blossoms* or the Gish sisters in *Orphans of the Storm*), and is no less

(Continued on page 261.)

REVALUATIONS—5

Roger Manvell

The purpose of this series of reviews is to look again at films which have come to be regarded as "classics" in the history of the cinema. Although what matters to us here is their intrinsic value as motion pictures, their importance historically speaking will also be kept in mind. In addition we shall give a summary of some past critical opinion on the film.

We hope this series of revaluations will be of use to film societies faced with the problem of preparing programme notes for their audiences as well as of interest to all readers who like old as well as new films.

MOTHER, 1926

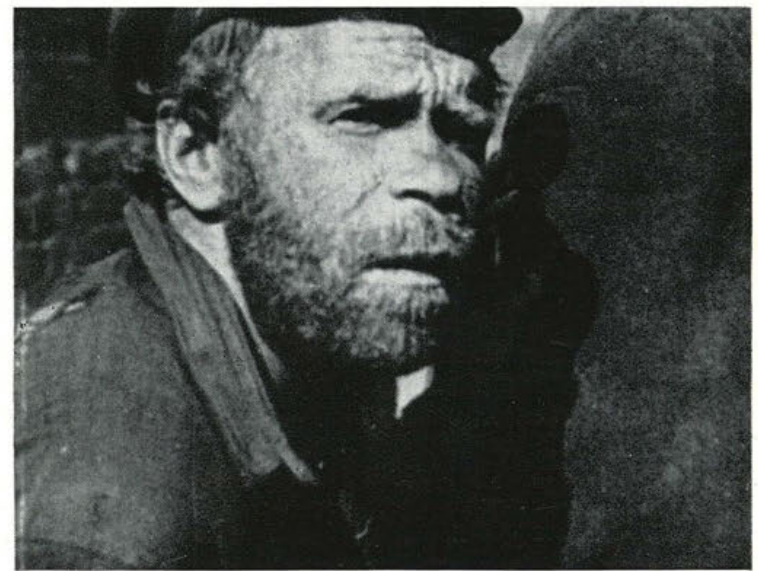
Produced by Mejrabbom-Russ. Directed by V. I. Pudovkin. Scenario by N. A. Zarkhi from the novel by Maxim Gorki. Photography: A. N. Golovnia. Design: S. A. Koslovski. With Vera Baranovskaia as the Mother and Nikolai Batalov as the Son.

FOR THOSE WHO WISH to idealise the restricted art of the silent film—cut off in its prime by the devastating intrusion of sound—*Mother* is as good an example as any of the high degree of imaginative expression which could be achieved by the moving picture alone, aided now and then by a rare explanatory title or an odd line of dialogue. This film holds its own against time, a beautiful museum-piece belonging to a phase which could perhaps be called the pre-Renaissance of the cinema.

Critics usually classify the work of Eisenstein and Pudovkin by means of one of those neat formulæ of contrast which may well show only part of the truth. Thorold Dickinson explains the nature of this contrast as follows:

"While Eisenstein's films provoked discussion and respect (or the reverse), their direct appeal was to the intelligence first and only through the intelligence to the emotions. They were connoisseur's pieces in the main. But Pudovkin's films appealed directly to the emotions of the mass audience and only secondly to their intellect. They were passionately clear and simple. To Pudovkin the most important element is the story. His attitude to his subject is personal and emotional, not detached or intellectual. In these silent films he used mixed casts of actors and non-actors, the latter to bring verisimilitude in those parts where realism was more necessary than the ability to act". (*Soviet Cinema*, p. 34.)

Both these distinguished artists reveal (in Eisenstein's case unhappily only in the past) an excitement in their work which communicates itself to an audience in what was once an electrifying manner. I well remember the emotion with which I first saw films like *Potemkin*, *October* and *Mother* some twenty years ago—a kind of artistic awe which had no conscious connection with the social system which these films were designed to advocate. It was an excitement entirely derived from the artistic form they exemplified. After seeing a hundred ordinary films, these seemed to have the music of



Three studies in character from "*Mother*". Vera Baranovskaia as the Mother, Nikolai Batalov as the Son, and the drunken husband.



"Mother"

pure art within them. I cannot see the best of them to-day without experiencing once more something of these same feelings—such films as these trail clouds of glory, though their formal qualities, once so advanced to our admiring eyes, seem to belong now to some advanced medieval period when the æsthetic of montage managed to transcend the on-coming pressures of socialist realism.

While Eisenstein was normally directly concerned in his films with the emotions arising out of the great mass-movements of Russian revolutionary history, Pudovkin's interests centred on the feelings of people who had to play their individual and often painful part in these conflicts. He was, and still is, an actor himself—he plays the Officer who interrogates the Mother in this film. His books on "Film Editing" and "Film Acting" show his desire to make full use of the actor's powers within the framework of the principles of formal montage, which were the essence of Russian film treatment during the later period of the silent cinema. He writes:

- "The actor should be as close to the editing as the director. He should feel that he can lean upon him at every stage of the work. Editing should be precious to him, as shaping of his performance into the ensemble is precious to the stage actor, and he should be similarly eager and anxious for its success and the final linkage of every element of his work into the whole". (*Film Acting*, p. 84.)
- He showed great respect for the long tradition of naturalistic acting founded by Stanislavski in the earliest days of the Moscow Art Theatre, and he made a significant comment about it which explains a great deal of the technique of acting used in *Mother*:

"Extremely interesting are those passages in Stanislavski's memoirs where he speaks of the necessity for "gestureless"

moments of immobility on the part of the actor, to concentrate on his feelings all the attention of the spectator.

- "Stanislavski felt that an actor striving towards truth should be able to avoid the element of portraying his feelings to the audience, and should be able to transmit to it the whole fullness of the content of the acted image in some moment of half-mystic communion. Of course he came up against a brick wall in his endeavours to find a solution to this problem in the theatre.

"It is amazing that solution of this very problem is not only not impracticable in the cinema, but extreme paucity of gesture, often literal immobility, is absolutely indispensable in it". (*Film Acting*, p. 116.)

- The form of acting used in *Mother* is stylised for the purpose of underlining each emotion; expressions are frequently "held" on the screen so that their depth and significance are emphasized and re-emphasized, especially in the beautiful performance of Baranovskaia in the leading role. This acting technique is re-affirmed by the rhythmic methods of montage used by Pudovkin. Pudovkin is unique, however, in applying them so intimately to the expression of individual feeling in his characters.*

Paul Rotha in *The Film Till Now* (1930) comments on Pudovkin's methods of analysing a situation for its dramatic contents, and then reconstructing it afresh on the screen:

- "In *Mother*, we discovered the scientific method of the decomposition of a scene into its ingredients, the choice of the most powerful and suggestive, and the rebuilding of the scene by filmic representation on the screen. In this respect, I recall the sequence of suspense at the gate of the factory;

* See the analysis of the scene when the Officer demands evidence from the Mother of her son's revolutionary activities, in *Experiment in the Film* p. 40.

the gradual assembly of the workers; the feeling of uncertainty as to what was to happen. This was the result of an extraordinarily clever construction of shots and of camera set-ups in order to achieve one highly emotional effect. It may, perhaps, appear the simplest of methods, the basis of all filmic representation, but it needs the creative skill of a Pudovkin to extract such dramatic force from a scene. I recall, also, the scene with the falling of the clock; the discovery of the hidden firearms under the floorboards; the trial, with the judges drawing horses on their blotting pads; the coming of spring; the escape from the prison, and the final crescendo ending of the cavalry charge. It is impossible to describe the emotional effect of this film. Without hesitation, I place it amongst the finest works in the history of the cinema". (*The Film Till Now*, New Edition, pp. 234-5.)

Mother is fundamentally a very simple story of a woman living in Russia during the revolutionary period around 1905. Her husband is a drunken reactionary and her son belongs to the new political movement organising the strike. After her husband has been killed in the struggle, she is tricked into thinking she is doing the best for her son by revealing to the Police the secret of the weapons hidden under the floorboards of their miserable home. After a mock-trial the son is imprisoned and she realises she must herself join the revolution. The son is freed by an organised revolt in the

prison, but he is killed at the very moment he joins his mother in the great procession of the people. The cavalry breaks up the crowds and shoots them down. The mother dies holding the Red Flag in the face of the charging horses of Tsardom.

Pudovkin gives this drama every possible overtone he can, enriching each episode (the smashing of the clock, the sequence at the factory gate, the betrayal scene, the trial and the great procession) in the process of his analysis. The audience is gripped partly by the tension which belongs naturally to each successive situation, and partly by the carefully constructed mime with which Pudovkin builds up every detail of thought and feeling. In the final episode he resorts to the now famous simile of the ice-flow breaking up against the bastions of the great bridge with a movement parallel to that of the procession of men and women marching with the Red Flag held high before them, until they were scattered and broken by the cavalry. The ice-flow intensifies the action by its strong forward movement far more than by its obvious symbolism. The purpose of Pudovkin's technique is to sublimate the action of every part of his film, so that the commonplace is raised to the level of a kind of epic poem. It is, I believe, this poetic quality, this quality of silent music, which makes the film so exciting as well as so moving to watch even now in these days of rich, smooth photography and the blandishments of a sound track used almost always without poetic imagination.



Two shots from the culminating scene of "*Mother*": the mother carrying the Red Flag in procession, and the simile of the ice-flow breaking up.

(Dickens and Griffith continued from page 258)

typical for his characters like the two old gentlemen and Mrs. Bedwin; and finally, it is entirely characteristic of him to have such figures as are in the gang of "the merry old Jew" Fagin.

In regard to the immediate task of our example of Dickens' montage progression of the story composition, we can present the results of it in the following table:

1. *The old gentlemen.*
2. Departure of Oliver.
3. *The old gentlemen and the watch. It is still light.*
4. Digression on the character of Mr. Grimwig.
5. *The old gentlemen and the watch. Gathering twilight.*
6. Fagin, Sikes and Nancy in the public-house.
7. Scene on the street.

8. *The old gentlemen and the watch. The gas-lamps have been lit.*

9. Oliver is dragged back to Fagin.

10. Digression at the beginning of Chapter XVII.

11. The journey of Mr. Bumble.

12. *The old gentlemen* and Mr. Brownlow's command to forget Oliver forever.

As we can see, we have before us a typical and, for Griffith, a model of parallel montage of two story lines, where one (the waiting gentlemen) emotionally heightens the tension and drama of the other (the capture of Oliver). It is in "rescuers" rushing along to save the "suffering heroine" that Griffith has, with the aid of parallel montage, earned his most glorious laurels!

BOOK REVIEW

HOLLYWOOD SCAPEGOAT, the biography of Eric von Stroheim, by Peter Noble. (Fortune Press 15/-).

STROHEIM HAS LOOKED, unflinching, into the depths of human depravity. He understood its shame and . . . its insidious fascination. And from this knowledge, which he refused to ignore, he fashioned a world both real and monstrous, which is unique and entirely his. (He wrote and designed the eight silent films he directed, and starred in three of them.) His theme was lust, his setting mostly palatial splendour, but so shrewd was his insight, so uncompromising his realism, that his films gained a wider interest in their reflection of society and manners.

Blind Husbands and *Foolish Wives* presented the idea, fashionable just after the first world war, that wives have as much right as husbands to illicit romances. *Greed* revealed what the squalor of American working-class life actually looked like. And the films he modelled from his memory of a decaying Viennese aristocracy—*Merry-Go-Round*, *The Merry Widow*, *Queen Kelly* and, notably, *The Wedding March*—showed something of the contrasts between wealth and poverty and of violent class prejudices.

But it was the unrelenting honesty of his exposures of vice that made his films most remarkable. Stroheim peopled them with arrogant rakes, fetishist old barons, perverted demimondaines, willing and unwilling maidservants, outraged cripples. With a connoisseur's refinement he portrayed their erotic excesses in perfumed boudoirs; with grim disgust he sketched their sordid exploits in brothels. Stroheim's daring, his cynicism and stinging mockery, shocked; the dash and intensity, the gilded magnificence, the sensational glamour of his pictures, enticed and bewitched. His films were potent because they described a fragment of life he knew, hated and loved.

It is to this erotic aspect of Stroheim's work that Peter Noble has devoted his most original chapter, "Stroheim, Sex and Symbolism". Not everyone will share his unqualified admiration of it. For it can be argued that if, as the author claims, Stroheim taught Americans more about love than any other director, this was a horrifying lesson which stimulated the reaction against realism and any kind of sensuality, and encouraged the conventional, hypocritical pseudo-morality in the American cinema. Debauchery may be the antithesis of puritanism, but it is not the only alternative. Admittedly, passion untainted by either perversion or prudery has rarely appeared on the screen; but this does not make Stroheim the film pioneer of love, however much one may applaud his audacity and brilliance in revealing the base instincts that often disfigure it.

Mr. Noble, an ardent and almost wholly uncritical admirer of Stroheim, has drawn on a great many anecdotes and compiled a considerable mass of factual information for his record of the artist's life; but the bias is so frank that even a reader who knows little about Stroheim could, I imagine, form a pretty independent opinion of him.

Stroheim emerges as a figure at once superb and pathetic: an artist with integrity, a supreme contempt for conventions and a disastrous inability to be practical; a man with courage,

arrogance and, from the beginnings of his career, with grievances so overwhelming that recriminations became second nature to him.

The myth of his extravagances and intransigence has coloured nearly every appraisal of his significance as a director. Mr. Noble devotes his pages to accounts of stormy production episodes, and not to critical reassessments of Stroheim's films. It is clear that, since Stroheim's grandiose ideas did not reach the screen as originally conceived (entire sections, notably in the case of *Greed*, having been scrapped by the producers), the critic can judge him only by a mutilated part of his work. Mr. Noble, however, never attempts to come to terms with this problem. He repeatedly emphasises Stroheim's sincerity, his scrupulous realism, his genius in handling actors, but gives no indication of his qualities and defects as a film craftsman. This is left to a number of appendices compiled from the writings of other critics, the most illuminating passages occurring in quotations from Herman G. Weinberg and Lewis Jacobs.

Stroheim's career during the last twenty years has been marked by his triumphs as an actor and his tragic failure to resume work as a director. The author gives a detailed account of his fortitude in the face of hostility from Hollywood producers, of his successes in France, where he received the Légion d'Honneur for his magnificent performance in *La grande illusion*, of his latest and happier trip to Hollywood to play with his former colleague Gloria Swanson in Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard*.

"Hollywood Scapegoat", though it reads more like an assembled scrapbook than a considered biography, is certainly crammed with information about an important artist and a tremendous personality. A number of stills from the many censored scenes of Stroheim's films adds to its interest.

CATHERINE DE LA ROCHE

THE SOUND TRACK

Spirit of Disney

No student of the sound track may consider his record collection even begun until he has a complete set of the Disney tracks. To the purists, the early recordings from sound-track are by far the most important part of the series. Although inferior in recording quality, they have an authenticity that is unmistakable—*Three Little Pigs*, *Farmyard Symphony*, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and *Bambi*. To-day the recording companies are no longer satisfied with dubbings from the original. A special session has to be called and a "reconstructed" version is prepared. Gone are the plinks and plonks, the kerdouings, and razz-a-kerr-pings of the Disney special effects department. A new recorded performance, technically perfect, is produced; it lacks atmosphere and "bite".

Ichabod and Mr. Toad, Disney's latest cartoon production, is represented in the gramophone catalogues by the new

"reconstructed" recordings. *Ichabod* ("The Legend of Sleepy Hollow"), occupies the four sides of Brunswick 04508-09, with Bing Crosby, supported by a chorus and cast that fail to capture the feeling of the original track. Not that *Ichabod* was the best part of this two-for-the-price-of-one Disney; but on these records, all the flaws of the narrative become unbearably obvious. Crosby sounds bored and the finale falls completely to pieces in sound track form.

Mr. Toad is a different story. He was an interesting gentleman in picture form, but the assembly of an all-British cast for the track added greatly to Disney's interpretation of the essentially English atmosphere of the tale. Although the gramophone records (Capitol) are not true sound track, they have succeeded in capturing more of the cartoon spirit than *Ichabod*. Basil Rathbone and Eric Blore are perfect in this narration and the voices have a ring that Crosby never even approaches. Of course, if you are a true sound track enthusiast, you will have to add both sets to your collection; but I think you will be playing *Mr. Toad* long after *Ichabod* has just become a set of numbers on your list.

The Walt Disney Recordings

1. Sound Track Recordings

Three Little Pigs—H.M.V. BD 387: *Three Little Wolves*—H.M.V. BD 387: *Lullaby Land*—H.M.V. BD 370: *The Pied Piper*—H.M.V. BD 375: *The Orphans' Benefit*—H.M.V. BD 382: *The Grasshopper and the Ants*—H.M.V. BD 386: *Mickey's Moving Day*—H.M.V. BD 386: *Who Killed Cock Robin?*—H.M.V. BD 358: *Farmyard Symphony*—H.M.V. BD 910: *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*—H.M.V. BD 514-516: *Pinocchio*—H.M.V. BD 821-823: *The Reluctant Dragon*—H.M.V. BD 961-962: *Dumbo*—H.M.V. BD 993-995: *Bambi*—H.M.V. BD 1021: *Make Mine Music*—"The Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met"—Columbia DB 2264-2266.

2. Reconstructed Recordings

Melody Time—"Little Toot"—Capitol CL 13119: *So Dear To My Heart*—Capitol ACL 13196-ACL 13199: *Ichabod*—Brunswick 04508-04509: *Mr. Toad*—Capitol.

JOHN HUNTLEY

FILM SOCIETY NOTES

AN ANALYSIS of the 1949-50 programmes of about 80 representative film societies in Great Britain—one third of the total—yields some interesting results. In considering these, however, two factors must be taken into account: first, the range of programmes is restricted by availability of product, and second, no year is a truly representative year since some films have always been available for a longer time than others—thus a film like *Quai des brumes* is seldom booked now.

The 1949-50 winner, hands down, is the Italian comedy *Four steps in the Clouds*, which was booked for about 20 per cent. of the programmes investigated. The following were runners-up:

Sunshine follows Rain (Sweden): 15 per cent.

Farrebique and Carnet de Bal: 14 per cent.

The Murderers are Amongst us: 12 per cent.

La belle et la bête, Hamnstadt (Sweden), *Rembrandt* (Germany), *La Kermesse Heroïque*: 11 per cent.

Intolerance, Open City, Les enfants du paradis, Ordet (Sweden): 8 per cent.

The Stone Flower (U.S.S.R.), *La fille du puisatier, La femme du boulanger, Henry V*: 7 per cent.

Below this figure, varying from a 4 to 6 per cent. representation, were *La règle du jeu*, Riefenstahl's *Olympiad* 1936, *Panique, Le million, Ivan the Terrible, Day of Wrath, Poil de Carotte, Fric Frac, L'Idiot, M. Alibi, Caligari, Lumière d'été, Germany Year Zero, Quai des Orfèvres, Alexander Nevsky, Bataille du rail, Trouble in Paradise* (Lubitsch), *The Road to Heaven* (Sweden), and various Marx Brothers films.

The list of films which received only a single booking on this analysis is equally heterogeneous: *Dreigroschenoper, Sullivans' Travels, Grapes of Wrath, Tobacco Road, How Green was my Valley, La fin du joir, Espoir, Goupi mains rouges, The Pirate, Scarface, Les portes de la nuit, Atonement*

of Gosta Berling and Potemkin.

The Swedish cinema, it appears, has a far greater film society than public following: judging by some of the films—*Ordet* and *Sunshine follows rain*, for instance—one might attribute this as much to the overall restriction of available product as to actual merit. Or, at least, one would like to do so.

America comes very low on the list, *Intolerance* being the only American film at all widely booked, Ford and Sturges films getting single bookings, *Boomerang* and *Strange Incident* one or two. There are probably various reasons for this: American films get wide public showing, so there is in general less cause for showing them to film societies, much of the American cinema of the 30's, which would be suitable, is not available. Also, there seems in general to be a certain anti-American prejudice. One says "prejudice" because for the last fifteen years Hollywood has consistently turned out a percentage of interesting and valuable films, which hold their own with the output of any other country.

Contemporary Italian cinema is represented by a slight, disproportionately popular, 9-year-old comedy, *Four Steps*, by *Open City*, and, to a lesser extent, by *Germany Year Zero* and *Sciuscia*. This reflects its incomplete public representation since the war: and *Bicycle Thieves* and *Paisa* have not yet been made available to societies.

Unavailable films most sought after by societies are: *Bicycle Thieves, Jour de Fête* (both to be released non-theatrically in January 1951), *Winterset, The Informer, A nous la liberté* and *Sous les toits de Paris*.

These statistics, of course, should also be viewed in the light of the fact that the requirements of a large 35 mm. society and a 16 mm. society serving perhaps only a 100 people are very different. Thus silent films (a few steadies like *Intolerance* excepted) are rarely shown to large audiences.

CORRESPONDENCE

"All the King's Men"

The Editor, SIGHT AND SOUND

Dear Sir,

Although I agreed with most of the article on *All the King's Men* by Mr. Richard Winnington in your June issue, I was disappointed in finding, after an interesting introductory comment on the relation between novels and their adaptation to the film medium, that Mr. Winnington's opinion of the Robert Penn Warren novel was that it is not "a great or even significant contribution to American literature", and that "the novel is only . . . a version of the rise and fall of a demagogue based on the life of the late Governor Huey Long".

It is not a "great" novel but it is, at least, "significant", and it is interesting to note also that it was originally conceived as a play under the title *Proud Flesh*, and as such it clarified much that may be misinterpreted in the novel: principally, that it is not just another life of Huey Long. The protagonist, Willie Stark, occupies the position of mediator between the ordinary politician (Tiny Duffy) and the liberal humanitarianism of Adam Stanton, the idealist who is really no better than Stark, for he refutes "politics", wanting to keep his little bit of the world clean and ignoring the "means" to the "ends" as long as he does not witness them. Warren is concerned with interplay of these conflicting points of view (just as Lionel Trilling is in *The Middle of the Journey*) and their apparent irreconcilability until doubts are aroused in the minds of the adversaries.

The film does not convey any of this. Robert Rossen has failed to understand the significance of Jack Burden. That Judge Irwin is Burden's father is omitted, and at the end of the film—which

constitutes Burden's rebirth in the novel—after the death of Stark, Anne Stanton leans against a column in the Capitol, and Burden tells her to wait for him so that Adam's death may not be without purpose. It is on this that the film collapses.

It is obvious that Rossen has just grabbed at the "thriller" aspect of the book, and has ignored the implications. It is this inability of the film, which your reviewer indicates, to capture the "awful responsibility of Time", and, I would like to add, an awareness of the author's criterion, which reduces the film—as an interpretation of the novel—to the level of mediocrity.

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD D. BEALE

Lytham-St. Anne's, Lancs.

Dear Sir,

May I point out an inaccuracy in Richard Winnington's review of *All the King's Men*? Rossen's contribution to *Body and Soul* did not extend to the script, which was the work of Abraham Polonsky. I think this is worth noting, because the success of that picture would seem to have been considerably due to Polonsky (portions of his impressively detailed script are reprinted in John Howard Lawson's book, *Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting*) and also to James Wong Howe, who photographed it with a far greater expressiveness than Rossen was able to extract from Burnett Guffey, his cameraman on *All the King's Men* and the very different *Johnny O'Clock*.

After *Body and Soul* Polonsky, of course, went on to direct *Force of Evil*, from the adaptation of Ira Wolfert's novel *Tucker's People*, which he prepared in collaboration with its author. As an example of creative adaptation *Force of Evil*, compressed, personal and freshly imagined, presents an illuminating comparison with *All the King's Men*.

Yours faithfully,

LINDSAY ANDERSON

Sequence, London

COMPETITION

Report on No. 4. No correct entries were received for this competition (identification of the films made by directors working outside their native countries): the correct solution was—top row: Eisenstein's *Time in the Sun*, Rossellini's *Germany, Year Zero*; middle row: Lang's *You Only Live Once*, Dmytryk's *Obsession*; bottom row: Clair's *The Ghost Goes West*, Duvivier's *Flesh and Fantasy*. Most competitors were defeated by *Flesh and Fantasy*, generally identified as *The Scarlet Street*.

No. 6. SIGHT AND SOUND occasionally prints examples of the more adventurous sales campaigns undertaken by cinema managers. Several of these will be found on page 248 of this issue, including a special "Stromboli" ice cream served in the cinema restaurant, and a verbal tie-up between *Captain from Castile* and Castile soap. You are to imagine that you have been appointed manager of your local cinema at a time when the circuits, owing to shortage of new pictures, have been compelled to issue and reissue films lacking in recognised box-office appeal. Outline highlights of a campaign to pack in the public for one of the following films—*The Last Laugh*, *Mother*, *Un Chien Andalou*, *Greed*, *Orphee*, or Orson Welles' *Macbeth*. Contributions to be limited to 200 words. Closing date, August 26th. Entries should be addressed to SIGHT AND SOUND, British Film Institute, 164 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.C.2, with "Competition" marked on top left-hand corner of envelope.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Stills:

PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *Sunset Boulevard*.

WARNER BROS. for *Caged*.

20th CENTURY-FOX for *Panic in the Streets*, *No Way Out*.

J. ARTHUR RANK ORGANISATION for *Theirs is the Glory*, *On the Night of the Fire*, *Trottie True*, *Oliver Twist*.

BRIAN DESMOND HURST for *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

SEQUENCE for *On the Night of the Fire*.

THE LONDON FILM CORRESPONDENT for *Titanic*.

FILM TRADERS for *Caccia Tragica*.

GELARDI RASHBROOKE & CO. for *Bitter Rice*.

JOHN MADDISON & JEAN PAINLEVÉ for stills from Painlevé's films.

THE NATIONAL FILM LIBRARY for *Ohm Kruger*, *Olympischespielen*, *Mother*, *Ossessione*.

ANDRE PAULVE for *L'éternel retour*, *La Belle et la Bête*.

FILMS SIRIUS and STUDIO ONE for *Les Parents Terribles*.

VICTORY FILMS for *Meurtres*.

A.G.D.C. for *Journal d'un curé de campagne*.

Material:

HARCOURT, BRACE (New York) and DENNIS DOBSON (London) for Eisenstein's *Dickens*, *Griffith* and the *Film To-day*.

CORRESPONDENTS

U.S.A.: Harold Leonard

FRANCE: Francis Koval

ITALY: Frances Mullin Clark

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